

THE WIRE

MUSIC NOW AND ALL WAYS

issue 88 june 1991 \$5.00 £1.95

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Michael Jackson? Elvis Costello? What the hell's going on here?

Nothing, actually, that we haven't done before. Maybe the scales are tipping a little differently as from this issue, but **The Wire** (and yes, we've restored the definite article – since almost everyone we know has called it **The Wire** from the beginning) is essentially the same argumentative, alternative, demanding music magazine it's always set out to be.

The words that used to appear at the top of the cover were "Jazz, improvised music and . . ." Later we simplified that to "Jazz and New Music". The implication ought to have been clear enough: we were never merely a "jazz magazine", and we've never tried to confine ourselves to the cut-and-dried marketing of music which the business and our several contemporaries have chosen.

Jazz has always been a cornerstone of our coverage, and it will continue to be so. But the trouble with using the word "jazz" is that people tend to think that that's all you do. Even though we've had Karlheinz Stockhausen, Anita Baker, The Fall, David Sylvian, Peter Maxwell Davies, Frank Sinatra, Frank Zappa, Harold Budd, Jimi Hendrix and many others in the magazine.

So the word from now on is "music". Excellent music. No teen-pop phenomenons, no fashionably fads: music worth hearing, worth talking about, worth documenting.

The spread of musics contained in this issue – **Mozart to Costello** – should give you a fair idea of what we're attempting to do. What we're **not** trying to be is an "adult rock magazine": there's enough of that going on already. Nor is this the facile and cursed eclecticism which is making so much of the world's music into a flavourless soup. Instead, we aim to be ever more discriminating as well as more diverse in our coverage. None of us have the time for nonsense or the merely second-rate. You can read about stuff elsewhere, if you want to. But if you also think that **Michael Jackson** is some added freak making music for ten-year-olds, and not one of the creative masters of today's black music, we'd like to suggest a different perspective.

Our crusade on behalf of the margins isn't over. It's changing. We'll continue to insist that **Albert Ayler** should be honoured alongside those musicians whose names mean far more to record-company accountants and Our Price stock buyers. And because we're opening up to the world, that insistence will resonate a lot further.

Richard Cook
Editor

the wire

*
A member of the *Nanmor Group*

Issue 68, June 1991, £1.95, \$5.00 ISSN 0952-0666

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Printing by Garnett Dickenson Printers Ltd, Rotherham and London.
The Wire is distributed in the UK by Magazine Distribution Ltd, Gloucester Court, 22-26 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

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and we resent it.

* now's the time

MILES - A CAPITAL CHOICE

MILES DAVIS, David Sanborn and Herbie Hancock are among the artists appearing at this year's Capital Radio Jazz Parade at London's RFH from 16-20 July. Full line-up includes Herbie Hancock Qt (16 July); Chick Corea (17); B B King (18); Miles Davis (19); David Sanborn (20). Details from 071 240 7200.

* And a second big event in July is the first major Sheffield Jazz Festival, which takes place from 12-28 July and boasts Andy Sheppard, Jimmy McGriff and Red Rodney among its headliners. Dates include Red Rodney Qt (12 July); Ian Shaw/Carol Grimes (13); Red Holloway (14); The Jazz Garden (19); Ralph Surton (20); Jimmy McGriff Qt (21); Andy Sheppard's In Co-Motion (23); Loreta Scott/Don Rendell (28). Concerts are at the Leadmill or the Crucible Theatre. Other events include free outdoor lunchtime concerts in Tudor Square by various artists, including Hornweb (13) and The Next Decade, w/Mick Beck, Fred Baker and Peter Fairclough (17). Details from 0742 769922 (Crucible) or 0742 754500 (Leadmill).

ELVIS'S A POPPIN'

ELVIS COSTELLO and his latest group The Rude Five, featuring guitarist Marc Ribot and ex-Attractions drummer Pete Thomas, head out on a UK tour in July. Dates are London Hammersmith Odeon (1-3, 5-7 July); Bristol Colston Hall (9); Liverpool Royal Court (12); Glasgow Barrowlands (13); Edinburgh Playhouse (14); Lerwick Clickimin (16).



James Brown photo by Leslie Pyle

THE NAME OF THE WO'S

SOUL NEPOTISTS Womack & Womack bring their band for a brief UK tour in June which takes them to Liverpool Empire (14), Bristol Hippodrome (16); London Royal Albert Hall (17, 18); Worthing Assembly Hall (19); Cambridge Corn Exchange (20); details from box offices. They'll be playing songs from their latest Arista CD *Family Spirit*, which features Cecil and Linda Womack, Simeya Womack, Bobby Womack, Earl (The Pearl) Womack, Harry Womack and – surely some mistake here? – Womack Womack on drums!

* The Godfather is back! James Brown Womack returns to play two UK concerts at Birmingham's NEC (3 July) and London Wembley Arena (4). He also has a new single scheduled for June release and a four-CD compilation of his greatest hits, *Star Time*, is released by Polydor in late May.

* Bluesmen Robert Cray and John Lee Hooker share a single UK date at London's Crystal Palace Bowl on 6 July. And this year's Edinburgh Festival will include Scotland's first-ever blues festival – this features Jimmy Rogers, Leon Redbone and the Lonne Brooks Band and takes place on 20 and 21 August: details from 031 557 1642.

GO MAD AT WOMAD

ALGERIAN RAI star Cheb Khaled and Senegalese singer Baaba Maal make their

only UK appearances this year at the 1991 WOMAD Festival, which takes place at Reading's Rivermead Leisure Centre

on 19-21 July. Also appearing at the festival are Papa Wemba, Mark Springer/Sarah Sashandi, Test Department, The Tard of Haidaux, The Terem Qt, Mustapha Terry Addy, Toumani Diabate and many more. Details from 0734 591591. Also Youssou N'Dour, African Headcharge, Remmy Ongala and Mari Boine Persen are among the artists who'll be appearing at the WOMAD Holiday Weekend at Morecambe on 23-25 August. More details next month.

MOZART WAM-BAMS ON!

THE MOZART bicentennial celebrations continue this month with major concerts in Bath, Bournemouth and London. At the Bath Festival, John Eliot Gardiner conducts the Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists in a performance of the *Mass in C Minor* (5 June, details 0225 463362); at the Bournemouth Festival, Peter Knapp and Travelling Opera present *The Marriage of Figaro* (28) and Sir Yehudi Menuhin conducts the Bournemouth Sinfonietta and Bournemouth Symphony Chorus in the *Requiem* (30, details from 0202 297327); and at London's RFH, the celebrated pianist Alfred Brendel plays two concerts with Sir Neville Marriner and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields – their programmes include *Symphony 34, Piano Concerto 20* and *24* (21); *Symphony 35, Sinfonia Concertante K297B* and *Piano Concerto 27* (26, details from 071 928 3002).

* Opera star Jessye Norman flies in for a RFH concert on 13 June with the Philharmonia (conductor Giuseppe Sinopoli)



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— the programme will include pieces by Webern, Strauss and Brahms's *Symphony 4*. Ms Noeman will also make a personal appearance at the Piccadilly Circus branch of Tower Records to sign copies of her recordings: that's at 3pm on Saturday 8 June.

JOHN HARLE — ANOTHER FINE MASS

SAXIST JOHN Harle plays a series of three concerts at London's Purcell Room this month. To begin the series he performs Michael Nyman's "Shaping The Curve" plus pieces by Gavin Bryars, Chick Corea, Mike Westbrook and others in a recital with pianist John Lenehan (1 June); at the second concert Harle leads a performance of his own large-scale *Saxophone Mass* (7); and finally he plays a set of Duke Ellington material with pianist Richard Rodney Bennett, plus a set with his regular band featuring pieces by Marvin Gaye, Gil Evans and Pat Metheny (15). Details from 071 928 3002.

• The Balanescu Quartet have added a further date to their *Wise*-sponsored concert series of the Michael Nyman string quartets. They will now play the three quarters at an extra concert at London's QEII on 11 June. Details from 071 928 3002.

YES AND YES AGAIN

THE RE-FORMED YES (which includes nearly everyone who's ever been in the band) play five UK concerts in June as part of their current world tour: these are at Birmingham NEC (25, 26 June)



John Harle photo by Howard Sooley

GREENWICH — MUSIC ALL WAYS!

THE MUSIC of Abdullah Ibrahim, J S Bach, Andy Hamilton, Igor Stravinsky, Orphy Robinson and John Harle can all be heard at this year's London Greenwich Festival, which takes place from 7–16 June. Jazz concerts include Andy Hamilton (7 June); Trevor Watts's Drum Orchestra (8); Abdullah Ibrahim/Basil Coetzee (10, 11); Orphy Robinson (11). Classical concerts include Bach's *Mass In B Minor* (9); soprano Rita Hunter with a Wagner recital (11); Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* w/Frances de la Tour and the Endymion Ensemble (14). Oboist Robin Carter, the festival's musician-in-residence, plays four concerts, including a Mozart recital (10) and a contemporary programme with works by Xenakis, James Wood, James Ellis (12). And John Harle in duo with Richard Rodney Bennett plays a definitive crossover concert including works by Duke Ellington, Ravel, Cole Porter, Debussy, George Gershwin, Kurt Weil (13). Details from 081 517 8687.

and London Wembley Arena (28, 29, 30). Their new *U/Wave* recording is available on Arista, while Atlantic are planning

to release a major retrospective of their music in July.

• Black Rock Coalition's Living Colour, with guitarist Ver-

non Reid, conclude their Spring UK tour with dates at Manchester Academy (1 June) and London Brixton Academy (2). And Great White Wonder Bob Dylan, 50 last month, is highlighted at this year's Southampton Film Festival (1–16 June), with screenings of *The Concert For Bangladesh* (8, morning); *Don't Look Back* (8, evening); *Pat Garrett And Billy The Kid* (11); *The Last Waltz* (13). There will also be a public forum on his "secret life" (plus rare concert footage) led by well-known Dylanologists Robert Shelton and John Baldie (9). Details from 0703 832905.

ON TOUR: CARLOS WARD, ABDULLAH IBRAHIM

SAXOPHONIST Carlos Ward brings his quartet for a UK tour in June. The group — with Michele Rosewoman (piano), Emmanuel Gatewood (bass), Pheeroan Akhlaif (drums) — plays Manchester Band On The Wall (20 June); Leeds Trade Club (22); Sheffield Leadmill (23, June); Birmingham MAC (23, evening); London Jazz Cafe (24–29); Glasgow Jazz Festival (30).

• There have been some additions and alterations to the Abdullah Ibrahim/Basil Coetzee Jazz Services tour dates first listed in *Wise* 87. Latest schedule is: Manchester Band On The Wall (30 May); Norwich University of East Anglia (31); Nottingham Festival (1 June); Birmingham Adrian Boult Hall (2); Dundee Festival (5); Bath Festival (6); Glasgow Royal Concert Hall (7); Edinburgh Queens Hall (8); Bradford Alhambra (9); London

• now's the time

Greenwich Festival (10, 11); Newcastle Festival (12); Exeter St George's Hall (13); Amble-side Zeffirelli (14); London Watermans Arts Centre (15); Brentwood New Hermit House Theatre (16). Details from 071 829 8354.

in town tonight

The Wire Guide to the month's top jazz gigs
(* indicates other gigs at this venue are listed elsewhere on these pages)

Bath Festival* (0225 463362): Musician/Anglo-Soviet Jazz Project (1); Carol Kidd Qt (7); 29th Street Sax Qt (9). **Fringe Festival** (0225 316461): Sean Sulzmann Project, w/Evan Parker, Julian Arguelles a/o (3). **Birmingham Cannonball** (021 772 1403): Steve Berry's Foolish Hearts (21). **Bracknell South Hill Park** (0344 484123): Mervyn Africa (4). **Bristol Albert Inn** (0272 661968): Ed Jones Qt (16).

Cambridge Exchange (0223 464389): Tony Remy's Latental Thinking (9). **Cardiff Sherman Theatre** (0222 230451): Sergey Kuryokhin (1); **Coveney Biggin Hill Hotel** (clo 0254 673871): Steve Berry's Foolish Hearts (20). **Dundee Festival*** (0382 23281 ext 3663). Andy Sheppard's In Co-Commotion (7). **Glasgow Jazz Festival*** (041 552 3572): Carol Kidd, Bob Berg/Mike Stern Band (28); Betty Carter (29).

Henley Hempstead Blue Note Club (0442 242827): Steve Arguelles (20). **Huddersfield Bogey's** (0484 518174): Paul Hession Group (11). **Leeds Destinations** Our (0274 494658): Tommy Chase Qt (5); Ed Jones Qt (12). **Manchester Band On The Wall***

(061 834 1786): Jean-Pierre Llabador (13). **Newcastle Festival*** (091 232 8520 ext 6254): Andy Sheppard's In Co-Motion (9); 29th Street Sax Qt (10); Carol Kidd Qt (11); DHSS (13); Pinski Zoo (14); Jonathan Gee (15).

Nottingham Festival* (0602 419741): Steve Williamson Band (6). **Sheffield Leadmill*** (0742 664608): Steve Berry's Foolish Hearts (16). **Workshop Royal Arts Centre** (clo 071 937 4967): 29th Street Sax Qt (11). **York Arts Centre** (0904 627129): Steve Berry's Foolish Hearts (7).

And, finally, June's London highlights **Barnet Old Bull Arts Centre** (081 449 0043): John Surman (28). **Bass Clif** (071 729 2476): Alfredo Rodriguez Sextet (11-15); Sue Sharrock/Terry Disley Group (18); Evidence (19); **The Edge** (071 262 4127); District Six (8); Liane Carroll (10, 11); Tina May (12); Jean Toussaint Qt (15); Ed Jones Qt (22). **Jazz Cafe*** (071 284 4358): Odean Pope Trio (1, 2); Kenny Garrett Qt (3-8); Barbara Dennerlein Band (9-11); Jean-Pierre Llabador Qt (15); **Zawinul Syndicate** (22, 23). **Pizza Express** (071 489 9191): Klute Suit (23). **RFH** (071 921 0600): Milton Nascimento (24). **Ronnie Scott's** (071 439 0747): Monty Alexander Trio (3-15); Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy (17-18). **Town & Country Club** (071 284 1221): Bob Berg/Mike Stern Band (27). **Tenor Clif** (071 729 2476): Bertie Reading (3-8); Rick Margizza (13); Steve Berry's Foolish Hearts (14); Kenny Barron (18-24); Lol Coxhill (23); Ian Shaw/Sarah Jane Morris Band (27, 28). **Waterman's Arts Centre*** (081 568 1176): Tony Remy's Latental Thinking w/Cleveland Warkiss (14).

MARC COHN: SONGWRITER

by Mike Fish

"EVERYONE IN America thinks of the 70s as the era of disco, of something horrible," remembers Marc Cohn, "but for me it was *Moondance* and *Cars* And *Spark* and *The Pretender*."

That lets you know where Marc is coming from. He's a 30-ish piano-player from Cleveland, Ohio, an accredited NYC sessionman and songwriter, and now the author of *Marc Cohn* (Atlantic), which is good enough to at least be mentioned in the same breath as the records he's just recalled. America isn't short on vocalists at the piano, and Cohn's ground has already been strolled over by the likes of Billy Joel and Bruce Hornsby. But at least half-a-dozen of the tunes on his debut outclass anything either of them has come up with. "Walking In Memphis" is a classic travelogue which painlessly incorporates a tribute to Elvis, "Silver Thunderbird" wraps up a working man's values in a couple of stanzas, and "Saving The Best For Last" is giddily beautiful; the other eight, including an impromptu shuffle through Willie Dixon's "29 Ways", are sustained by great playing as often as by their intrinsic class. The hummability of Cohn's melodies honours his tespunning, too, rather than decelerating their impact.

Cohn worked New York's session scene for some years before burying himself in his own songwriting. He ran a 14-piece band called The Supreme Court, that was sort of like an early Blood Sweat and Tears — "We did stuff like a Las Vegas revue version of 'You've Got To Hide Your Love Away'." Unfortunately, only three clubs in the city had stages big enough for the band to play on. Meanwhile, Cohn picked up credits including piano on Tracy Chapman's debut, before piecing together a demo that Atlantic liked enough to let him eventually go ahead and record his own set. "It was a deep, dark winter in New York City and it took ten months to finish the record. I became a subterranean creature."

Surprisingly, in the circumstances, the music sounds sparse and unpretentious. There are strong contributions from the other musicians but what you remember is Cohn's piano and his dryly emphatic voice. A certain bluesy authenticity allows him to carry material like



Mark Cohn



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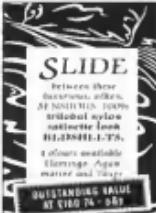
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the Dixon tune, which isn't bad going for a nice Jewish boy from Cleveland who grew up in the house next to George Stell when the conductor was leading the Cleveland Symphony.

Care and concern for the fabric of the songs doubles the pleasure of Marc Cohn. There's little sense of sessionman ennui, maybe in part because Cohn is deprecating about his own abilities.

"Billy Joel said that he wished his left hand wasn't so much slower than his right. I feel both my hands are slower than Billy Joel's left!"

WIN SOME ...

THE THREE winners of our Coltrane competition in *Wire* 86 were M J Abbott, Canterbury, Kent, Mrs L Clark, Salford 7, Lancs; Rick Wood, London Colney, Herts. They each receive a set of five Coltrane Impulse! CDs.

LOSE SOME ...

AND APOLOGIES to photographer Herb Snitzer, whose picture of Coltrane on page 31 of issue 86 was wrongly attributed to Bill Wagg.

CHARLES FOX 1921-1991

THE BRITISH jazz community lost one of its greatest figures with the passing of Charles Fox, who died in Weymouth on 9 May.

It seems inconceivable to think of Charles being gone. His lifelong passion for the music never left him, and his dedication in following the latest developments set an example which no other critic of his generation could match. He began writing about jazz in the 40s, and made himself into one of the most acute and insightful of critics. Besides the jazz press, he was also a commentator for the *New Statesman* and other journals, and his style was inimitable: leavened with a rather bushy wit, authoritative without bludging the reader with his knowledge, Charles's copy remained a delight for 45 years.

But it was as a broadcaster that he will be best remembered. He hosted the BBC's *Jazz Today* series for some 25 years (until its disgraceful deletion by Radio 3 in 1988), and in that time established the programme as the most creative purpose of its kind. Countless musicians and listeners alike have much to thank that precious piece of airtime for, and it was Charles's expansive presentation – whatever he might have thought of some of the fare on offer, he MC'd each set with solicitous and thoughtful enthusiasm – which lent the programme its indispensable air.

He leaves a few choice additions to the bookshelf. *The Jazz Scene* with Val Wilmer, and the first volume of *Essential Jazz Records* with Max Harrison and Eric Thacker; and he contributed a delightful series to this magazine in its early days, *Seven Steps To Jazz*. But what we'll miss most is Charles's companionship, the friendliness of a shared enthusiasm which he was happy to keep up with a colleague or a fan or anyone with an interested pair of ears. And I'm sorry that I won't be able to discuss this summer's tour by the West Indies with one of cricket's most eloquent admirers.

RICHARD COOK

ANDY HAMILTON: SAXOPHONIST

by Val Wilmer

IN A N East London studio, just before Christmas, two generations of saxophonists met, locked horns and made the kind of jazz music for which most record producers would give their eye-teeth. Outside, the wind whistled around the converted warehouse alongside the Thames; inside the low-pitched, shabby room, Andy Hamilton and David Murray were steaming. They cut just a couple of numbers, strutting their stuff like a late-day Herschel and Pres. Their styles reflected the musicians they had heard on the way up: Hawkins and Parker, Gordon and Ayler, but the emphasis was on contrast, not contest. An amiable exchange between equals.

For Hamilton, embarked on his recording debut, it was a trifle nerve-wracking. Not that this was obvious. He remained Mr Cool throughout, stylish in black-and-white patterned cardigan; only the occasional uneasy jut of his chin revealed his awareness of the occasion. At 72, with six decades of playing behind him, he was not about to appear to be ruffled by any younger musician. And yet, his jousting partner was arguably the most accomplished and seasoned saxophonist of his generation, and a man not noted for conducting himself with any false modesty.

In the event, it was Murray who relaxed first, visibly enjoying the chance to share in an elder's experience. On "Old Folks", the unburdened knowliness of Hamilton's tenor, the sum of his living, was thrown into relief by Murray's bass-clarinet, sonorous, magisterial, grave. But it was "Savvesshine", the buoyant calypso Hamilton wrote for Errol Flynn when he was MD on the late actor's yacht, that set the visitors dancing.

For the first of several star-studded dates for World Circuit, Hamilton used his regular band. On piano was Sam Brown, an associate of almost 40 years, who came to Britain with the sizeable Jamaican RAF contingent during the War. On trumpet, and overseeing problematic musical moments, was son Graeme, a former member of the Midlands Youth Jazz Orchestra and, until recently, Fine Young Cannibals.

Duets with Jean Toussaint and Steve Williamson were also recorded, and a quadruple saxophone attack on a blues featured Andy Sheppard as well. Vibraphonist Orphy Robinson and pianist Jason Rebello put in appearances, and scattered throughout, inspiring and pushing, were guest percussionists Nana Tsiboe, Mamadi Kamara and Mark Mondesir. Oh, and Mick Hucknall, long-locked singer from Simply Red, does a version of the ballad "You Are Too Beautiful" which is good enough to eat.

How did this apparently unknown Jamaican persuade all those heavyweights into the studio? The answer lies somewhere between the nature of his personality – humble, confident and generous both with time and expertise – and a total dedication to playing 'polishable' music. To Hamilton, only the best is good enough for himself and the listener, and despite a lifetime of setbacks, he has dedicated himself to the music with a single-mindedness that has drawn respect from all quarters.

Arriving in Birmingham in 1949, he walked into a hostile climate which had little time for black people, even those who played with his degree of authority. Trad was the dominant West Midlands style,



Andy Hamilton/photograph by Val Wilmer

but Hamilton refused to be daunted. He played bebop in the early 1950s with fellow Jamaican settlers, including the trumpeters Pete Pitterson and Dizzy Reece, and the late Sammy Walker, an accomplished tenorman and legendary figure on the London scene. Ten years later there were occasional afterhours sessions with Joe Harriott whom he'd met in Jamaica when the Kingston-born altoist worked at Hamilton's home-base on the north side of the island. In the main, though, his work was confined to the Caribbean community where he became 'the' bandleader for any social occasion. In recent years, the saxophonist has worked with greater frequency. His workshop big band, the Blue Pearls, was the nurturing ground for countless youngsters, and he has operated within the West Midlands educational system as well, devoting himself selflessly to the propagation of righteous sounds. "If you have the music in you, I have the time," is his motto.

In 1988, as Birmingham's Jazz Musician of the Year, he was given the keys of the city. Television and concert appearances have helped put his name on the map, while his regular Monday nights at The Bear, a pub on Bearwood Road, have featured outstanding guests such as American trumpeters Art Farmer and Harry Edison and local saxophonists Kathy Stobart and the late Dudu Pukwana. More recently Scott Hamilton packed the place, inspiring his namesake to issue an invitation for the next record.

Andy is philosophical about the album changing his lifestyle. Going into the studio has been recognition enough for now. Behind him he has a list of solid achievements. His place in the black community is confirmed, and in Birmingham he's a local hero. If, in the words of the late Graham Greene, success is the postponement of failure, then what on earth has he been doing all this time?

Big Apple Jazz by Howard Mandel



Photo by Andrew Putney

THESE'S A newly renovated basement downstairs of the Time Cafe off Broadway, around the corner from the Tower CD-video-books complex, where Jerry Gonzalez and his Fort Apache band lay deep Yoruba rhythms under the Manhattan melodies of Monk and Miles, where altoist Vincent Herring burns, where members of the 29th Street Saxophone Quartet (Bobby Watson, Jim Hartog, Rich Rothenberg and Ed Jackson) slip-slide, signify and step forth as their bop-inflected arrangements call each horn in turn front and centre. The Time crowd is more social than those covering the music charge at the picrier, established clubs; chatter, table-hopping and gossip ensues, even as the jazz heats up.

There's another new basement off 6th Avenue under the Cornelia Street Cafe, where violinist Billy Bang, drummer Pheeroan ak Laff and others have led small weekend combos. Visiones now offers an every-Monday-night jam session organized by trumpeter Eddie Henderson. And trumpeter Ted Curson's returned to the Blue Note to host a session after the last regular set.

All of which is to say that jazz is bursting out like blossoms in fresh spring, or maybe more like mushrooms in the woods after the rainy season. This City may be filthy, pot-holed, thick with panhandlers and conmen, the homeless and dis-oriented. A creative spark survives.

Even some institutions are awakening. Not just the Village Vanguard, which under Lorraine Gordon's gradual shift of her late husband Max's preferences has featured Bill Frisell's electric guitar, tenorist Dewey "I waited 20 years for a gig here" Redman, Cecil Taylor (out of the back room where he hobnobs, onto the stage where he solos, ever fleet and more incisive), and Butch Morris conducting a wildly mixed ensemble — tenorist Willie Williams, trumpeter Stanton Davis, trombonist Art Baron, vibist Monty Croft, trombone-electronics J A Deane, harpist Zeena Parkins, amplified acoustic guitarist Brandon Ross, bassist Reggie Workman, drummer Reggie Nicholson and pianist Adegoke Steve Colson — through such of his sweet melodies as "Fling", "The Dice", "The Long Goodbye" and "Never Ever After". A flick of the

baton in his fist, and Butch sends his players towards *any* variations on his motifs.

Not just the Blue Note, which welcomed joyous power in the person of Elvin Jones, whose sextet included too-often-overlooked flute and altoist Sonny Fortune, Chicago-based pianist Willie Pickens and would-be-sax avatar Ravi Coltrane.

Not just the Knitting Factory, which hooked Keith Tippett and Andy Sheppard in duo and with the Balanescu String Quartet, closely followed by bassist Percy Jones. Thanks to the latest round of discount transatlantic air fares?

No, the winter's biggest news was Lincoln Center's decision to found a jazz department with, by the mid 90s, a one million dollar annual endowment. Rob Gibson, the open-minded, earnest and music-wise director of this high-profile project (which grew out of the success of the Classical Jazz series, produced by Alina Bloomgarden with consultant Stanley Crouch and artistic director Wynton Marsalis) comes from several years with the estimable free, City of Atlanta-sponsored Jazz Festival.

Gibson knows several shades of politics, something about fundraising, and more than a little about the honoured place in cultural history due Sun Ra, the Art Ensemble, drummer Ed Blackwell, et al. Gibson intends to present not simply gigs, but ambitious, well-prepared programmes. Though he's still struggling, *vis à vis* his institutional responsibilities, with the "What is jazz?" conundrum — does Reggie Workman's repertoire for pianist Matilyn Cispell, clarinetist Don Byron, drummer Gerry Hemingway and guitarist Mikele Navazio swing? — Gibson tends towards inclusion rather than exclusion of fat-flung styles and innovation. He hasn't released a summer schedule yet, but his broad perspective, validated by prestigious Lincoln Center, ought to influence grant funders inching into jazz to relax their upright standards even as New York's governor threatens to cut 50% of the state's art budget, and National Endowment of the Arts monies are more grudgingly given.

So you know we've been busy. And folks, that ain't close to all.



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Each month we test a musician with a series of records which they're asked to comment on and "mark out of five" — with no prior knowledge of what it is they're hearing! This month, Mark Springer takes the test with Philip Watson

CO-FOUNDER OF cult British pop-jazz group Rip, Rig & Panic, Mark Springer has always pledged musical allegiance to a very broad church. Classically trained and able to play Mozart by ear from an early age, Springer enjoyed a catholic musical upbringing which took in everything from Chopin to David Essex. Most obsessively of all, it also included jazz, and the legacy of Coltrane, Monk, Cecil Taylor and Eric Dolphy continues to play an important role in his music.

Since leaving RR&P in 1983, 31-year-old Springer has concentrated on a solo career which explores these multifarious influences. A solo LP, *Plains*, was released in 1985, and last year he recorded the much-applauded *Swans And Turtles* with viola player Sarah Sarbandi, a former member of RR&P. Springer has also written music for theatre, television and cinema. His music to a BBC2 play, *The Fall Out Guy*, can be heard this month, as can his second solo project, an album of 20 original compositions entitled *Mews* (Virgin Venture).

BILL EVANS

"My Man's Gone Now" from *Sunday At The Village Vanguard* (Riverside). Evans (p), Scott LaFaro (b), Paul Motian (d).

It's got that 60s Blue Note feel to it, but it's not McCoy Tyner or Herbie Hancock. Is it Bill Evans? I like his playing a lot, I like the sensitivity. It's not got some of the clichés that pianists can lapse into; it feels very fresh to the moment. He tried to be more and more open each time he played, and I can relate to the spirit of that. Sometimes you have to shed the things you know to come up with new material. It's very beautiful three stars.

GLENN GOULD

"Prelude and Fugue in A minor" from *Bach Preludes, Fuguettes & Fugues* (CBS). Gould (p).



Mark Springer

(*Straightaway*) That's a quote from a Bach prelude. It's a two-part invention. It's Glenn Gould — because there's no pedal and it's very clear. He makes the piano sound like a harpsichord. Using little pedal is not a great way to play, but it does allow him to get into the percussiveness of the piece. Gould is a brilliant interpreter of Bach. I'll give it two-and-a-half.

KEITH JARRETT

"Nagoya, Part IIb (Encore)" from *Sax Bear Concert* (ECM). Jarrett (p).

It sounds like Gurdjieff or some kind of Eastern thing. Oh, it's Keith Jarrett — didn't he do an album based around the Gurdjieff's music (*Sacred Hymns*)? There was a time when I was really into Keith Jarrett, especially the early stuff, but I must say I have become less and less impressed with him. Practically, he's quite limited; he doesn't utilise the full range of sounds. And he's very restricted dynamically. I haven't heard this album, but I feel that I have — it could be from any one of

his records: two stars.

FATS DOMINO

"Everybody's Got Something To Hide Except Me And My Monkey" (Reprise single). Domino (p, v), (other personnel not listed).

It's a Beatles tune, and it's much better than how the Beatles did it, but I can't place the pianist.

IT'S FATS DOMINO.

Is it? I thought he was bluesier than that but, to be honest, I don't know much about him. I like it, it's got a lot of drive, but I'm not made on Beatles tunes, and I couldn't say he's a particularly memorable player. I'll give it two again.

MITSUO UCHIDA

"Pour Les 'Cinq Doges'" from *Douce Etude Pour Piano* (Philips). Uchida (p).

That's great. Is it Debussy? *L'Isle Joyeuse*? Is it a woman playing? I could sense it in the way she's playing, the type of touch. Because I've

worked with Sarah (Sarhanda) for so long, maybe I can sense a woman musician. It sounds like Martha Argerich.

It's Mitsuko Uchida

Oh, I would have said her, but I've never heard her play Debussy. I think she's fantastic. She has the two ingredients that a pianist should possess — she's very sensitive and she knows how to create a beautiful sound. The thing about pianists is that you almost have to create your own obsessive world of sound in spite and not because of the instrument, and she does that. That's excited me more than anything else, but, still, I'm hard to please: four stars.

MICHAEL NYMAN

"Miserere Paraphrase" from *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* soundtrack (Virgin Venture). Nyman (p); Alexander Balanescu (vn).

This is quite wacky — it sounds like German Expressionist music or Kurt Weill. Oh, it's Michael Nyman — it's from one of the

Greenaway movies I quite like it actually. I don't think it's inspired, but I like his rawness compared to the smoothness of Philip Glass. I think Nyman and Greenaway are great collaborators — the music very much works with the pictures — but as music in itself, it lacks something, and all great music has to stand on its own. Ultimately, this is not really going anywhere, so I'd say three stars.

STAN TRACEY

"Air On A Shoestring" from *Tandem* (Ogun). Mike Osborne (as); Tracey (p).

The alto player sounds like Ornette. It's great — I love the piano playing. Is the sax player Braxton?

Thank Britten.

Well, the only guy who plays the piano like this is Howard Riley or Keith Tippett, but it doesn't actually sound like either of them. Ah, it's Stan Tracey, but I liked it before he got into this part (more melodic and rhythmic). I like it when he goes off

more. I wasn't mad on Stan Tracey until now, but I like the feel of this. I like the freedom and movement; three stars.

CECIL TAYLOR

"Excursions On A Wobbly Rail" from *Looking Ahead!* (Contemporary). Taylor (p); Earl Griffith (vib); Buell Neidlinger (b); Dennis Charles (d).

It's a 60s album. No? Well, late 50s then. It must be very early Cecil Taylor, from *Is Tradition or Looking Ahead!* It's got that Caribbean drummer on it, and Buell Neidlinger on bass. I love this, I really love it. I like it a lot more than the later stuff. Cecil goes all the way with himself, in which case I have to go all the way with him. I have a great respect for him, but I still feel that his music limits itself. Cecil has gone into a certain energy, and he's tapping into an energy that is timeless, but I sometimes think he should sit back and create in a different way. But this is up there with Mitsuko (Uchida); four stars. *

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real time

Chris Parker gets square eyes rescuing the new jazz vids

John Scofield

Live 3 Ways
PMI MVP 9912702

Fifty minutes of the great guitarist in three settings: organ trio, piano duo and current working band. With Don Pullen on Hammond and Marvin "Smitty" Smith on drums he rises above both the flatness of the studio setting and the *ad hoc* nature of the group to sound as if he's been with these collaborators for years. Dr John proves a sympathetic and sensitive partner, too, and Sco's regular group turn in their customary faultless performance, packed with restrained power. Highly recommended.

The Leaders

JAZZ A PARIS
Charly VID JAM 33

Great music, shame about some of the stuff in between. Anyone who's seen the band live will need no convincing that featured tracks like "Mudfoot", "Cool T" and "Blueberry Hill" are state-of-the-art sextet jazz. As Kirk Lightsey says, in one of the many overlong interviews, the Leaders are "most well-versed in all areas", a group packed with "the most information, foresight and spirituality". The non-concert footage, however, involving French photographers being shut out of dressing rooms and endlessly discussing such topics as the blues and the difficulties of their job (in French, *naturellement*) is less than edifying.

Stanley Jordan

CORNUCOPIA
PMI MVP 9912543

Nearly an hour of the young freeboard whiz hammering on in the company of an excellent acoustic band - Kenny Kirkland (p), Charnett Moffett (b) and Jeff Warts (d) - an electric group - Bernard Wright (ky), Jossi Fine (b) and J T Lewis (d) - and solo. He's a great virtuoso and technically innovative, and consequently can sound a little flashy - even vacuous - at times, but his celebrated solo party pieces ("Willow Weep For Me" and "Over The Rainbow") are undeniably *taurus de force* and his electric blues is another, with its intelligent use of electronic gadgetry.



Dizzy Gillespie And The U N Orchestra

LIVE AT THE ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL
Parkfield AEMJ 1001

I've seen this band a number of times and never been convinced it adds up to the sum of its parts (Paquito D'Rivera, Slide Hampton, Arturo Sandoval, Claudio Roditi, Steve Turner etc). With such a variety of superb soloists and a top-class rhythm section, it's perhaps ungracious to say, but I was bored after ten minutes.

Nat King Cole

THE SNADER TELESCRIPTURES 1950-1952
Virgil MCEG VVD 995

Fifty minutes of the great pianist and singer easing his way through such fare as "Sweet Lorraine", "Mona Lisa" (with strings), "Nature Boy" etc. Cole is simply his superb, impeccable self and Irving Ashby (g), Joe Comfort (b) and Jack Costanzo (bongos) are subtle, supple and discreet. Big vote of thanks for simply presenting great music undiluted and resisting the urge to intersperse it with talking heads or designers' "period deraul".

The Manhattan Project

PMI MVP 9912363

Wayne Shorter, Michel Petrucciani, Stanley Clarke and Lenny White are joined by Gil

Goldstein, Pete Levin and singer Rachelle Ferrell for a heavy, funky summer session. There are some fine barnstorming climaxes ("Summertime" especially), but as an interlocking group they don't always deliver, their sound a little cluttered to allow the players' full creative spirit to flow.

Harry Connick Jr

SWINGIN' OUT LIVE
Sony SMV 490702

Beginning with two rehearsal footage, the smooth young man who somehow manages to combine Monkish piano with Swing era Sinatra-ish vocals and Robert Redford's charm does his highly successful thing in front of an enraptured crowd. Try as I might, I was unable to resist the sheer talent and exuberance of the man. Sure, it's grandstanding showmanship from the off, but it's a hell of an act and Connick is that rare thing: an entertainer to his fingertips. Connick speaks all his chosen jazz languages fluently.

Archie Shepp

JE SUIS JAZZ . . . C'EST MOI VIF
Charly VID JAM 32

A brisk 1983 canter through the tenor/soprano player's musical influences from Ellington and Parker through 60s radicalism ("Mama Rose") and the blues, all reverently presented in French (subtitled) and English

real time

by an earnest French crew. If you find statements like "The music grew and found a universal audience", "Coltrane was like the brother I never had" and "Music for me is a language without words . . . Jazz is too complicated for most white people to understand" profound, then you'll find the film is packed with enlightenment. Musically, it's disappointing, featuring an under-rehearsed group which brings little to either standards or any of the Shepp originals. Shepp himself comes over as an odd mixture of passion and insouciance, and his playing is generally bleary and weary-sounding.

Various Artists
HARLEM ROOTS (Vols 1-IV)
Virgin MCEG VVD 863-8

Compiled lovingly from the soundies made for the Panoram jukebox in the 1940s, these are the famous forerunners of today's pop videos. They differ from those, however, in showcasing their subjects' talents, rather than using glossy gemmicky to conceal their

paucity of same. They're intelligently arranged, too, so if you're into big bands you should get Vol I (Ellington, Calloway, Basie, Millinder); showmen-fans will love Vol II (Fats Waller, Louis Armstrong and Louis Jordan); harmony freaks will go for Vol III (Mills Brothers, Delta Rhythm Boys, Deep River Boys etc) and miscellany lovers will have to content themselves with Vol IV (everyone from Nat King Cole through Dorothy Dandridge to Vanita Smythe). Unreservedly recommended — genuine slices of jazz history.

Miles Davis
MILES IN PARIS
Warner 9031 71350-3

Nearly 80 minutes of concert footage with Kenny Garrett (saxes, flute), Benjamin Riervel (b), Joseph McCreaty (g), Ricky Wellman (d), John Bigham (perc) and Kei Akagi (ky). Use of space and texture are the band's strengths and the music throughout is entirely absorbing — brooding, hypnotic and fierce-

ly intense by turns. "Amandla" and "Turu" are gems of controlled strength and tension. The interview with Davis is also well integrated into the whole and contains some typically pungent and considered comments on the artistic impulse, the creation of sound, improvisation, South Africa. Recommended.

Michel Petrucciani
POWER OF THREE
PMI/MVP 5912533

The pianist, with Jim Hall and Wayne Shorter, recorded in 1986 at the Montreux Jazz Festival. Over an hour of gentle, thoughtful duetting between Petrucciani and Hall, especially effective on Gillespie's "Beautiful Love" and "In A Sentimental Mood", leavened (and given extra muscle at just the right time) by a brief appearance from Wayne Shorter. An interesting contrast with the pianist's *Manhattan Project*, demonstrating what a supremely versatile and luminously funky player he is.



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CAPE CRUSADER

South Africa's most famous musician-in-exile is returning home to Cape Town

But not before he tours the UK or tells Brian Piesley, in this rare interview,

his later thoughts on Ellington, the avant-garde and the winds of change. Photo by Gideon Hart

THE INVOLVEMENT of South African players in Black American music, and the particular perspective they have brought to it, is a story that deserves a book to itself. Especially as the apartheid society of the 1940s and 50s provoked an exodus which spread the South African dialect so far and wide that it is now becoming absorbed back into the mainstream. That first generation of artistic exiles included Louis Moholo and the late Dudu Pukwana (among those who stayed in London), Chris McGregor (who settled in France) and Johnny Dyani (Denmark), as well as those who headed for the States such as Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela or (a recent visitor here) Jackie McLean's pianist Hotep Galata/Cecil Barnard.

Barnard's slightly older keyboard contemporary from Cape Town, Abdullah Ibrahim, has lived in both Europe and the States, and even back in South Africa in the mid-70s before the Soweto uprising. But it's an individual musical contribution, rather than his internationalism, that has made him the most widely known of all these expatriates after Makeba and Masekela. Quite an achievement for a piano player (and occasional saxist and flautist), but it's come about quite gradually and naturally through his unforced charisma and the breadth of his vision. Much of the latter came across in a single reply, late in my interview, concerning his current duo with saxist Basil Coetzee.

"The idea is not to play with a musician because they are, quote-unquote, great. It's that you have something compatible, not just as musicians but as people. Duke [Ellington] always said that he'll never play with a musician unless he knows how that person plays poker. The duo with Basil is really an extension of an agenda which has been set long ago. When we first started playing together, Basil was still a young man playing penny-whistle. We have made it our life's commitment to research and pursue the basic knowledge that God has given us in our specific area, because God says, 'For every nation I've prescribed the form of worship, so do not dispute with each other.' So basically that information, with our traditionally-based music in South Africa, is so vast . . ."

The same tone of wonderment and conviction that listeners find in his playing also characterised Ibrahim's verbal mixture of mysticism and down-to-earth practicality, as he went on to discuss the chord-changes of a specific South African hit-song of the 1950s. It surfaced too in the description of his early years, and the music of the Cape Town branch of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (another influence from the US, for that was where the church was founded). And yet again, when Abdullah discussed the racial and cultural melting-pot of Cape Town in the old days:

PRACTICALITY CAME through strongly when he described his method of working with present-day South African musicians to retrieve and revitalise the music that the white minority regime could not suppress. "With the traditionally-based things, I usually don't write out the parts because I can just play the line on the piano and the musicians can harmonise it right away. It all comes from singing, and gradually that's being lost because it's no longer necessary to sing in society." The technically more sophisticated side of Ibrahim's work came out when I praised the sound of his seven-piece 'jazz-based' band, Ekaya. "It's all in the voicing [of the horns]. Ellington was a master of that." And he told how, on one tune, the Ellington saxes sounded as they did because Harry Carney played with a full tone while the others played deliberately quietly. "But that was only on that one tune."

It was impossible to mistake the awe in Abdullah's voice when he brought up the subject of Ellington, especially when it was linked to the name of his wife, singer Sathima Bea Benjamin. "She has always been the guiding force, because we met through the music and we met through Ellington. She was working on an Ellington piece, I was working on an Ellington piece, and somebody asked me to accompany her in a concert. And we found that we were working both with the same piece, 'I Got It Bad And That Ain't Good'."

Another great victory for synchronicity came at the start of 1963 when the pianist's trio and Sathima were working in Zurich, while the Ellington band made its then annual trip to



Europe. "She went to the concert, and convinced Ellington to come and listen to us. We were busy finishing up the night, when she walked in with Ellington and the whole entourage — incredible!"

The result was that Duke immediately taped the trio for *Reprise*, an album which is merely impossible to find, whereas the recordings done at the same time by Sathima (some with Billy Strayhorn on piano) have never yet been issued. Long-term plans are afoot to make this material available through a new agreement between the couple and ENJA records. As with other artists, there are huge gaps in the legacy of his early career. The Europe-based trio of the 1960s can be heard on *JMY* (a recently discovered broadcast) and on *Black Lion*, which also has his first solo piano set, all of these containing a mixture of originals and standards and betraying an admiration for Duke and especially for Monk. But there's nothing from his first US period except a sideman appearance with Elvin Jones, on Elvin's first album after he left Coltrane.

Since the early 1970s, on the other hand, Ibrahim's recorded output has become so prolific that it becomes very difficult to choose definitive albums (see below). But one intermittent partnership which has been all but forgotten, through being so scantily documented, was with Don Cherry. He obviously regarded the pianist as a living example, not only of the international message of jazz but of the viability of alternative forms of black music.

"We don't make the distinction between reggae music and jazz music and calypso," said Ibrahim. "For us it's all the same, it's the experience of the extended family. Those years in New York, what later came to be called the 'new music', we were all part of it."

During this whole period Ibrahim was still known as Dollar Brand, Brand being originally a Dutch surname (he was officially classified as 'coloured', i.e. of mixed race) and Dollar being a corruption of his given name Adolf — an unlikely link with the regime which first categorised its citizens by racial origin. Nevertheless, back home again is where Abdullah will be this autumn, leading a 15-piece edition of *Ekaya* combining African and American musicians. The wind of change now makes such things possible in South Africa for virtually the first time.

"We're starting a performing arts centre in Cape Town, and a course in music with a curriculum based on the tradition. Of course we should have access to the Eurocentric cultural information base, but not to the detriment of what we have. In fact, they should enhance each other. And, if we're talking about moving the country forward, that's precisely what we have to do. Not just on a cultural level, but on a social-economic-political level. The starting-point is to be able to see that we are one *in spite* of our cultural differences . . . God has given us this point in time, which is very exciting, that we have been able to draw from all of these different cultures and see what we have come up with through the music. It's

continued on page 33

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Techno-geek Tom Corbin lends you his ears!



INSTEAD OF just worrying about making music this month, let's reflect for a moment on one of the myriad means of listening to the stuff. The ubiquitous personal stereo cassette player, now available in such an overwhelming range of models, prices, qualities and features, has in fact an interesting history of improbable design mutations which everyone seems to have forgotten, no doubt to the relief of the manufacturers.

The walkie's dinosaur ancestor was the Philips Casettophone, a strange product which galumphed onto the market shortly after the launch of the pre-recorded 'muscassette' as a medium 20-something years ago. It looked not unlike the cassette recorders of the day in terms of size and general design, but was intended to stand upright just like your Mum's kitchen tranny, or to be swung nonchalantly from the right hand by its integral handle while blasting out Val Doonican's Greatest Hits (the positioning of the volume control on said handle facilitated the adjustment thereof with the right thumb – there were no left-handed people in those days). The machine had a certain awkward charm. Unfortunately, it didn't have a rewind mechanism, an earphone socket or of course a record button, while remaining as bulky as (and nor significantly cheaper than) a cassette recorder of similar quality. Its extinction was assured, but not before rival manufacturers Bush produced the Discasette, a bizarre hybrid which played seven-inch singles on a vertical slot-access record deck as well as pre-recorded cassettes (incidentally, anyone owning an example of either of these is invited to donate them to the Hardwire Museum of Music Technology).

The first Sony Sowaway, as the proto-Walkman was named, also came with a few endearingly runty qualities, such as the provision of a 'talk line' microphone which enabled you to mute the music while you conversed with your friends, the bus conductor, or indeed the unfortunate companion who was sharing the experience with you – the Sowaway had two headphone sockets, enabling you and a friend/partner to listen in tandem. However, the fact that these machines were absurdly expensive at the time meant that the *bar-pollie*, by and large, didn't have these innovations inflicted upon them; by the time the concept got as far as your local Boots, most of the silliness had been bred out of it. On the other hand, the sight of hearty young couples tottering around Knightsbridge wearing glazed expressions while wired together like cyborg bondage enthusiasts made it all worthwhile, as did the fact that the talk-line mics were highly directional and enabled you to eavesdrop on hushed conversations several yards away.

Years later, the manufacturers have largely stripped the personal stereo of silly features such as the above. This, however, presents them with the problem of how to add value

to what is essentially not only a small and simple product but one which tends to be more useful the smaller and simpler it gets. Attempts have included the incorporation of radios (obvious and OK), recording facilities (obvious and good to amazing), auto-reverse (anyone brain-dead enough to let the inevitable blank chunk at the end of a tape play to the end should be allowed such a facility on the NHS), remote control, solar power and even a built-in TV. In fact, about the only thing personal stereos have been unable to do is talk or help you get a tan.

Until now.

If the press release had been dated a week earlier than 8 April, I'd have been wary of reporting the launch of two new personal stereos from Aiwa, the HS-JX707 (around £260) and the HS-RE7 (£71.99). The former is such a triumph of miniaturisation you may be unsure which of its weeny little buttons you've pressed. Fortunately, however, the thing has a built-in electronic voice which intones such choice phrases as "fast forward" or "play" to let you know what's going on, although I'd have thought that a "play" statement was begging the question a bit, unless you happened to be listening to Cage's 4'33". Unfortunately, there's no mention of the possibility of programming this facility yourself with useful phrases such as "You paid *how* much for this?" or "Now, here's what I want for my birthday". The latter is a sportsy-type model which simply has a UV sensitive disc stuck on it which changes colour when you, human, have been in the sun too long. It's easily done; just ask Aiwa's r&d team. Presumably if the indicator takes on a crisp, blackened colour, you're dead. Never mind. If the sun doesn't get you, market forces will.



THE ART of course jazz: Christopher Fuller directs a jazz workshop at Barnet College, Russel Lane Precinct, Whetstone, London N20 0AX, currently running on Mondays from 7.30 to 9.30 pm; the new term should commence mid-September.

The standard is intermediate and you gotta follow the dots. The band usually settles down into an eight- or ten-piece, playing standards with a view to doing gigs. They're particularly keen to hear from trumpeters and trombonists. As is usually the case with A&CE courses, the course's fate hinges annually on there being enough participants to ensure continuation, although they've got a good record of re-enrolment so far. Info on 081 361 5101. Another summer school: Wellington College, Crowthorne, Berkshire has various courses on jazz, contemporary and classical music running this year from 27 June until 4 August. An enquiry to the school's London office (22 Gresley Road, N19 3JZ; 071 272 5664) should get you one of their superbly austere brochures, evocative of cold lino and weak cocoa. *

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Richard Cook surveys the achievements of **Michael Jackson** the musician,

*as the world waits for the release of *Dangerous*.*

Illustration by Brooke Auchincloss-Foreman

"The things I share with millions of people aren't the sort of things you share with one."

ENTERTAINERS HAVE never meant more to us than they do now – even as, perhaps, we think less and less of them. Now that all the world's a stage in a literal as well as a symbolic sense, with CD and video and satellite technology shrinking the planet into a vast cultural supermarket, the great entertainers beguile from all angles, from every crevice that their faces and voices might squeeze through. Musicians especially intervene in human affairs, and the more they intervene, the more they get paid for it. Michael Jackson is remunerated beyond most mortal dreams for his work, but he earns it – he shares these things with so many millions of us.

We shouldn't let numbers get in the way of enjoying or working or living with the music of someone such as Michael, but some of the background to his record deal with Sony Software is important. In March, Jackson signed what the press reported as a billion-dollar contract with Sony, mere days after his sister Janet had inked a considerable deal with Virgin. The exact details of Michael's agreement with Sony, which took a team of attorneys, managers and advisers a year to broker, aren't public knowledge, but he is said to be guaranteed – on a contract of six future albums – \$5 million per record with a profit split on all sales, on top of artist and songwriting and publishing royalties. At that rate, if Jackson repeated the sales success of, say, *Bad*, he'd collect somewhere between \$60 million and \$70 million. If he could secure another success on the scale of *Thriller*, he'd be making so much that he could probably buy the record industry itself.

Numbers, numbers. The details of Jackson's album commitments, though, are less important than the places the rest of the contract stretches towards: a Jackson Entertainment

Complex, a record label called Nation, a Columbia Pictures movie reportedly set to be like a *Star Wars* on planet Earth. David Lynch and Richard Attenborough are supposed to be among the directors slated for his next crop of videos, for which a cool \$12 million has already been set aside. Music and song are now elements in a grand strategy which is fuelled on spectacle, size and ambition.

Jackson's agreement has financial implications for everybody in the industry: it's altered much of the fundamental relationship between artist and business. Only a player of Jackson's stature could have done it, and very few of his contemporaries can aspire to wielding individual muscle on anything like the same scale. But it sets a precedent which seems broader and deeper the more you look at it. Has an entertainer ever been granted so much power?

"IT'S GOT a lot of power," mutters Michael on the intro to the unforgettable "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough", the song which opens *Off The Wall*, completed in 1979 just before his 21st birthday. Today, the record seems a little dated because of its rhythms: as a transitional moment in black music, between the disco era of the 70s and the new polyrhythmic funk of the 80s, it falls undecided between two eras. Yet Jackson's staunchless vitality enlivens every second of the record. As with all the discs under his own name, one could speculate endlessly on the level of input which the artist had, especially with such self-determining talents as producer Quincy Jones and songwriter/arranger Rod Temperton involved. But it was clearly a step forward in the same way that *Music Of My Mind* had been for that other child prodigy of Motown, Stevie Wonder, nearly ten years before.

Jackson was, after all, almost washed up before he was out of his teens. The pudgy imp of The Jackson Five had had a



disappointing decade. As he grew into a gangly youth and out of the kid's stuff setpieces like "Ben" and "Rockin' Robin", there didn't seem anywhere useful for him to go. The Jacksons still felt like the place where he belonged: *Destiny*, the group album which came out the year before *Off The Wall*, was the smartest long-player the group had ever done, and Michael's role in such as "Blame It On The Boogie" sounded irreplaceable. But *Off The Wall* shot him into another dimension altogether.

The origins of *Off The Wall*'s sound can be traced to earlier records. Quincy Jones hadn't done much of this sort of thing in the studio, but he had produced the smooth, steady funk of the Brothers Johnson, while key songwriter/arranger Rod Temperton had done some rather mixed work with Hearawave (remember "Boogie Nights")? The sophistications of *Off The Wall* took off from that primer and left most of the opposition gasping. The first track alone stacks up the most sophisticated call-and-response arrangements in black music: guitars, percussion, horns and strings weaving in and out of each other's path, the singer looping crazily through them, until Jones's fade on staccato, snapping guitars. When the record then glides into Temperton's "Rock With You", it's almost ecstatic. "So much up-tempo dance music is threatening," says Jackson in *Moonwalk*, "but I liked the coaxing, the gentleness, taking a shy girl and letting her shed her fears rather than forcing them out of her."

This was one of the beauties of *Off The Wall*. Though pitched as a dance record, a last youthful fizz through the then-dying era of glitterball soul, it hinted at tendernesses that most such music hadn't any breath left for. Jones might have produced "It's My Party" for Lesley Gore once upon a time, but he must have been damned if he was going to pack Jackson's album with cute filler. If the disco hi-hats of "It's The Falling In Love" sound almost quaint today, the harmonic detail of the vocal arrangements and the effortless power of the playing is still thrilling. Jones called up an exceptional roster of players: if you look through the credits, you'll find George Duke, Wah Wah Watson, Paulinho Da Costa, Greg Phillinganes, Larry Carlton and Phil Upchurch among the personnel.

Michael's own part in these proceedings is memorable, yet hard to describe. His singing is athletic, joyous, dizzyingly impressive, but he scarcely characterises the songs. His falsetto is peculiarly skinny, a strange development from his unbroken voice, while in a great passage like the chant from "Get On The Floor" he sounds possessed by his own virtuosity rather than by any demon in his soul. The tears at the end of "She's Out Of My Life" sound more like private loneliness than a broken heart.

The success of the record, though, made Jackson go public. It effectively finished The Jacksons as a long-term concern, but the group made *Triumph* straight after Michael's solo record and then went into a tour that produced a decent live album. "Walk Right Now" and especially "Heartbreak Hotel" proved that Michael could still make The Jacksons a creative vehicle; the latter song is a complex, layered effort which shows how

much he'd mastered during the making of *Off The Wall*. But the other Jackson brothers seemed like excess baggage.

P A R T I C U L A R L Y A F T E R *Thriller*. Like *Tapestry* or *The Dark Side Of The Moon* or *Sgt Pepper* or *A Love Supreme*, it's a record which carries so much extra freight – biggest seller of all time! – that it's hard to get past the accrued statistics and nostalgia and through to the music. Yet alone among all those milestones, *Thriller* remains an intensely playable and, well, thrilling record. The 40-plus million sales were more the result of brilliant marketing than the transcendent calibre of the music – *Off The Wall* is arguably a more consistent album, and it's daft to evaluate music on sales anyway – but the great secret of *Thriller* is the way its music thrived on repetition. The one legacy of Michael's Motown past was the simple resilience of the material. Just as you felt you could hear "Where Did Our Love Go" countless times and it would still sound heavenly, so the likes of "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'" could start hearts every time it came off somebody's turntable or radio. Except the cut and measure of Jackson's music had a streak of quality wide enough to convince anyone that this couldn't be merely 'pop', not in the way of old Motown stuff. Quincy Jones strengthened and polished all the working parts of the beat, and he brought in the Toto team that were then the most in-demand sessioneers in Los Angeles. The record didn't bubble along the way *Off The Wall* did but it spoke of a deathless, mature pop eloquence.

Still, it's a sometimes bumpy ride. Temperton's "Baby Be Mine" can be forgotten quite easily, the duet with Paul McCartney on "The Girl Is Mine" gets queasy after several plays, and even "Thriller" itself is basically rather silly and saved by the foolproof chart (some evidence of the excellence here can be gleaned by comparing the original with the take-off by Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, a useless effort that doesn't lay a glove on Jackson). What elevates the record is the way Jackson illuminates Jones's impeccable production values with an explosive personality. "Beat It", the song that welded black rock with the 80s and sold black music to MTV, would be clumsy if it weren't for the vocalist's extraordinary handling of the lyric, somewhere between a snarl and a yelp. "Human Nature", the tune that bewitched Miles Davis, is an enigmatic piece. The music is the kind of high craft which the likes of Steve Porcaro and John Bettis must have prepared for countless adult rock albums, but Michael's singing invests it with an ethereal and timeless wonderment.

Above all, there's "Billie Jean", such a perfectly conceived and delivered turn that it's easy to overlook the detail: in Michael's lyric and vocal, in the inflections set around the beat. I've heard this record so many times I ought to be inordinately weary of it, but its mastery is still exhilarating.

Jackson had become a master, but, like every entertainer of such ubiquitous presence, he was in danger of evaporating into the mass consciousness. After *Thriller*, we had the round of stories that strove to certify him. Consorting with llamas, chimps and fauns, attempting to buy the remains of John

Merrick or spending time in surgical masks might not be the sort of things the everyday joe indulges in, but Michael was hardly that sort of man anyway. The pity of it was that it may have denied us the sort of outside work from Jackson which Prince – to mention him at last – has done as a matter of course. While the workaholic from Minneapolis has delivered plenty of less than sparkling offerings in the course of his output, the totality of the Prince canon is fascinating. That Jackson's tiny number of extra-curricular projects – including the amazing "Muscles", produced and written for Diana Ross, and the contributions to The Jacksons' grossly-underrated album *Victory* – are unusually interesting makes his immersion in his own singular albums all the more frustrating. But it seems to be how he responds to inroads on his sanity.

Bad was a long time in coming – five years after *Thriller* – and its relatively poor notices and sales (a trifling 25 million or so) must have disappointed its progenitor, who wanted a perfect record and results to match. But *Bad* was just as strongly-built as *Thriller* in terms of singing and playing. Jackson sounded even leaner and more adventurous – listen to the lovely ribbon of voices he twines through "Liberian Girl" – and Jones coaxed his studio pros into invincible form. The difference lay in the strange turn some of the songs were taking. For every moment such as the unalloyed joy of the glorious "The Way You Make Me Feel", there was another that felt not so much contrived as misdirected: like the weird "Smooth Criminal" or the curt misogyny of "Dirty Diana". Compare that last one with Prince's "Little Red Corvette".

Prince's successes must have bothered Michael. Where the former is granted a grown-up reputation, credited with countless innovations and acknowledged as a master in the studio, Michael is still seen as playing for kids. Until Prince emerged, Michael's only effective peer was his friend and Motown forerunner Stevie Wonder, who's also suffered a decline at the hands of Prince – even though, in 1987, he released possibly his finest record, *Character*, which disappeared almost without trace.

If Prince's music is steeped in sexual language, Jackson's seems fey by comparison: he suggests asexual love, or at least a more platonic basis for human natures to subside in. The centrepiece of *Bad*, "Man In The Mirror", is an anthem for humankind of the same order as "We Are The World". Michael is thinking of the millions again, not of the one. With so many tuning in, he can only address the big numbers. And then he tunes us out again with the song that appears only on the CD version of *Bad*, "Leave Me Alone".

So we wait for *Dangerous*, the first album of Michael's new deal, scheduled for some time in the next few weeks. Sony Music president Tommy Mottola has already commented that "Michael has musically gone beyond anything that he has ever achieved in the past". What has he achieved?

Outside of the numbers, it's hard to explain. He isn't a sexy star, a muso type, a macho soul man, a gang member. In the

continued on page 33

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Richard Cook acclaimed a new study of popular singers, Mark Sinker warns us an experiment in jazz fusion

From A Whisper To A Scream

BY BARNEY HOSKYNNS
Fontana, £12.99

THIS SLIM, unassuming-looking volume is an important book, even if it's rather disappointingly short and sometimes sketchy. There have been plenty of attempts to chronicle great pop singers, either in biographical brochures or in the patchwork histories of rock and soul which every pop scholar takes a shot at sooner or later. Yet here we are pressed into higher considerations: the very grain of human voices, their textures and pulses, as they have been set to work at the rhythms and melodies of pop over the past half-century. It starts with Sinatra and Holiday, ends with Vandross and Baker, and in between is a wondrous congregation of voices, more than any but the most dedicated fan might have imagined. You must know the singing of Sam Cooke, but what about O V Wright, Tommy Hunt, Linda Jones?

Hoskyns doesn't set out to rescue these names from obscurity, nor does he try and make sense of them. His book is rather like a vocal line itself, straining after release, twisting itself into shapes that will try and evoke the sound of these voices and what they do to him. His introduction somewhat ominously picks up a lead from Roland Barthes and his complaint about "the way we say only 'what can be said' about music". To which one might answer, what the hell else can you do? Except: "In great singers there is something instinctive, something almost innocent, as if their voices were really only ciphers for something altogether more powerful than the representation of what a song 'says'". Any jazz follower will know what Hoskyns means. It's much the same as an instrumentalist shaping some standard with their differing 'voice'. Yet for singers to do that, to break out of their own signifying skins, is something else, and to annotate such efforts by the vocal giants is a formidable task.

To do it absolutely comprehensively is probably impossible, which is why *From A Whisper To A Scream* is more like an eloquent notebook on the pop voice's progress than a clear narrative. The author codifies his voices into categories of delivery rather than any genocidal structure: 'Earth Mamas', 'Holy Fools' and 'Freaks And Angels' are some of

the chapter headings. After Frank and Billie, he explores gospel traditions, soul of every stripe, and just a few white voices. There are many evaluations which are startling. I wish I could make every misled 'soul fan' read Hoskyns's elegant critique of Otis Redding, and it takes a courageous writer to call Marvin Gaye's "I Heard It Through The Grapevine" "surely the most overrated of soul records". Longer portraits of Etta James, Bobby Blue Bland and George Jones especially will make you annoyed that you haven't dug deeper into their music before, there are surprising homanages for Michael McDonald and Tim Buckley, and there is a piece on Luther Vandross which catches the drift of this elusive contemporary master better than anything I've read.

Hoskyns casts his net wide enough to catch Horace Andy and Burning Spear, too, but on some of the areas less defined by rock'n'soul he's weaker. He mentions Dick Haymes and Mel Torme, for instance, but you don't get the feeling he's really listened to them; or to Chris Connor, Cher Baker, Sue Raney and other voices in the swirl between jazz and pop. In that sense, the book is a pendant to Will Friedwald's superb *Jazz Singing* (to be reviewed on its British publication), which, however it may share Hoskyns's efforts to get into the grain, is fundamentally shy of post-50s pop.



Anna Baker photo by Coney Jay

It's an hysterical book. Adjectives flood the analysis like grace notes around a melody. In struggling to describe the differences in timbre and delivery of voice after voice, Hoskyns seems to get through the thesaurus twice (and Barthes wouldn't have approved). But he can be amazingly sharp and vivid. On Holiday: "a Little Mother Time prematurely old with suffering". On Smokey "an angel-fairy, serenading or lamenting with a courtly, ethereal tenderness". It's this colloquial juice that makes the book compelling.

RICHARD COOK

But Beautiful

BY GEOFF DYER
Jonathan Cape, £12.99

DYER'S IDEA – that Jazz needs a writing that's true to its spirit, that doesn't simply tie it down with flat historical description – is more or less true. His solution, a collection of semi-fictional prose portraits of dead Jazz gods (Mingus, Powell, Monk, Webster, Pepper, Prez, Chet and the Duke), ending with a critical essay and a bibliography, sounds lame, and isn't. Surprisingly.

He gussies up his elegant, conventional understanding of facts and cases with hardened evocative economy. The stories, laments for lives and times lost to a self-doomed vocation, occasionally skirt mawkishness, but even though the mutually reverential world he wants Jazzers to have lived in isn't one we'd recognise from Miles' autobiography, it sticks in your mind, like cheap music. There's too much Lonely-Soul-of-the-Misunderstood-Artist for anything deeper: he quotes George Steiner, Adorno and Harold Bloom in his essay – high humourless Romantics all (except Bloom, whose sense of mischief Dyer lacks). Also lacking: electric collective wit, wider culture, avant garde dissidence, pretentious overreach and unexpected achievement: most of what bop in particular mocked and embodied.

You surface wondering vaguely if the times they endured back in the music's Golden/Silver age were really so very like living inside an early Cure LP. But he's a Keith Jarrett fan. He isn't remotely hip.

Which is largely why and how the book succeeds.

MARK SINKER

great trane journeys 3

The final part of our survey of John Coltrane on CD finds Steve Lacy searching for ecstasy

in the last phase of the great saxophonist's career. Photo by Val Wilmer

ASCENSION

Impulse! 254618-2 (Germany)

June 1965. With Freddie Hubbard, Dewey Johnson, Marion Brown, John Tchicai, Pharaoh Sanders, Archie Shepp, McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison, Art Davis, Elvin Jones.

Crucial for any number of reasons, *Ascension* is, from a Euro/free perspective, Coltrane's most important record. For tradition-bound US tastes, the master may have been "blowin' right on past the money", but a straight line of influence extends from this roughly-structured freewheeling large ensemble work to *Machine Gun*, *Globe Unity*, Tchicai's *Cadentia Nova*, Danica, the Trio's *Conflagration*, the ICP Tentet, Hampel's Galaxie Dream Band, and the talking in multi-national tongues of 20 years of Berlin's Total Music Meetings. But as it projects into this unanticipated future, *Ascension* also harks back to the Black church. At its climaxes it becomes a rowdy prayer meeting, a spirir baptism, and the communal urge to be possessed, to share Coltrane's holy fervour, is palpable. Ornette's *Free Jazz*, *Ascension*'s direct predecessor, is a more light-hearted play of energies, almost jolly by comparison.

ASCENSION - EDITION I

Impulse! 254745-2 (Germany)

June 1965. *Materials* as above.

So essential is *Ascension* that the diligent *Wire*-person is duty-bound to buy it twice. *Edition I* is the "original" version, withdrawn by Coltrane after the initial LP pressing and supplanted with the other take of the piece. This has confused everyone so comprehensively that Impulse now have A B Spellman's liner notes on the wrong CD. The sequence of solos given in the notes to the *Ascension* above actually refer to *this* record. Individual solos may be, on the whole, stronger on Number II (here, Tchicai can't get started) but the ensemble playing's more together on *Edition I*, and there's a marvellous sequence for two arco basses that would, by itself, justify this additional release. Irritating is the subdivision (rectified on the other *Ascension*) into "Parts One & Two" with a fade-out and fade-in in the middle: sloppiness an engineer could have corrected in five minutes when processing this for CD. (The *Om* CD suffers similarly.)

LOVE SUPREME (LIVE)

France's Concert FCD 106 (France)

July 1965. With McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison, Elvin Jones.

Ascension rang further changes in Coltrane's ever-evolving sound and, consequently, the Antibes Festival version of "A Love Supreme" has a character quite different from the classic 1964 studio version. By now Coltrane is deliberately questioning his impeccable technique and beginning to overhaul his authoritative articulation with recourse to the slurs and split-tones of Pharaoh and Shepp and Ayler. Fifteen minutes longer than the studio take and a deal more viscerally exciting, this live "Supreme" incorporates a raging Jones/Coltrane duet in the "Pursuance" movement and a wonderful extended coda to the "Psalm" section with the saxophonist drifting freely in the overtone range. Sound quality is variable on this CD which also includes a 22-minute "Impressions".

LIVE IN SEATTLE

Impulse! WMCS-116 (Japan)

September 1965. With Pharaoh Sanders, Donald Rafael Garrett, McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison, Elvin Jones.

Transcendence or bust. "Cosmos" at once establishes the tone of terrible yearning that characterizes late Coltrane, and it is humbling in its seriousness. Sanders and Coltrane are pushing towards a searing kind of collective improvisation that McCoy, in particular, doesn't yet know how to field. The structurally-oriented pianist makes an heroic effort to shape and resolve the music but the floods of sound will no longer be contained. Drums and piano stroll for the first section of the 36-minute "Evolution" which features an improvising reed trio accompanied by Garrison — an astoundingly contemporary-sounding sequence. Later in the same piece there's an "Om" chant against Pharaoh's tenor moan (less contemporary).

MEDITATIONS

MCA/Impulse! MCAD 39139 (UK)

November 1965. With Pharaoh Sanders, McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison, Elvin Jones, Rashid Ali.

One great band dies and another is born in the turbulent swells of *Meditations*. "The Father And The Son And The Holy



Ghost ranks with *Aicensse* as Coltrane's fiercest studio recording. Too bad Rashied Ali and Elvin didn't get along, they sound marvellous together. Ali's skittering, dissolved-time nerve-pulse playing is effectively a kind of *contre* that Jones can move against dramatically, even melodically, at times working almost like a tympanist, freed of the (bebop-rooted) need to chase every soloist with the tide cymbal. "Love-Consequences-Serenity" is just surpassingly beautiful, with intensely moving solos from both hornmen and, in the "Serenity" movement, a rhapsodic and regret-filled Tyner solo.

LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD AGAIN!

Impulse! 254647-2 (Germany)

May 1966. With Pharoah Sanders, Alice Coltrane, Jimmy Garrison, Rashied Ali, Emmanuel Rabid.

Listen to enough late Coltrane and you start to wonder why you should ever listen to anything else. There are many great recordings of "Naima" but none that wrings you out the way the final Vanguard one does. Each successive saxophone statement – Coltrane, then Pharoah, then Coltrane again – seems to pour out of some deeper recess of the soul. Ali and tambourine-and-shakers man Rahid are furiously busy beyond the basic requirements of this ballad while Alice dreamily floats sad chords, yet all the contributions mesh, the result loaded with almost unbearable pathos . . . And after that they reinvent "My Favourite Things".

LIVE IN JAPAN VOL I

Impulse! 254610-2 (Germany)

July 1966. With Pharoah Sanders, Alice Coltrane, Jimmy Garrison, Rashied Ali.

Bits of this were previously available as the *Concert In Japan* double album. *Live In Japan Vol 1* adds an hour-long version of "My Favourite Things" to 70 minutes of "Peace On Earth" and "Leo". Ali's drums scatter patterns like the cobble of the Milky Way, and suddenly there's so much *space* in this music. Coltrane and Sanders, free-ranging comets, soar and burn, with no gravitational Jones to reel them in. Chaos, say *Soultrane* diehards. Ah, but chaos is just a subtler, higher order – ask a quantum physicist. "Leo", mid-way, has Sanders and Coltrane in exhilarating double (plastic) alto flight, the Japan trek incorporating the Chief's first recordings on the smaller horn since the Gene Ammons All-Stars of 1958. Vol 2 (formerly *Second Night In Tokyo*) is great, too.

INTERSTELLAR SPACE

Impulse! WMCS-118 (Japan)

February 1967. With Rashied Ali.

Most dramatically improved sound of all the CD reissues. *Interstellar Space* brings us as close as we're ever going to get to

the Coltrane tenor. Like, about two inches away from it. Awesome listening experience. "Mars" in particular will make your hair stand on end. The rhythmic pull of Coltrane's line is extraordinary, its force physically dragging Ali in its wake. There's no disputing who's establishing the pace in this duo setting, but Rashied follows with great sensitivity. His delicate brushwork on "Venus" is a masterly handling of texture. Ali complements Coltrane rather than challenging him as Jones did on, say, "Vigil" (*Kulu Se Mama*). *Interstellar Space* CD adds the outtakes "Jupiter (Variation)" and "Leo", also available on *Jupiter Variation*.

EXPRESSION

MCA/Impulse! 254646-2 (Germany)

February and March 1967. With Pharoah Sanders, Alice Coltrane, Jimmy Garrison, Rashied Ali.

Recorded before and after *Interstellar Space*, *Expression's* oddly inconclusive air is largely attributable to the production. Bob Thiele and Rudy van Gelder's normally high standards take a dive on this "final session" (so far). Piano's frequently muffled and distant, bass often inaudible, and Coltrane himself fades away towards the end of the title track. If the master tapes still exist, a remix would be a damn good idea. Rashied (again) is extremely creative on the crepuscular "To Be", but spotty flute and piccolo intonation rather sour this tone poem. "Offering" is a warm-up for "*Interstellar Space*" and not quite as transporting, despite brilliant deployment of harmonics. "Ogunde" and "Expression" itself are excellent pieces with very lyrical playing by the leader.

INFINITY

Impulse! WMCS-117 (Japan)

June and September 1965, February 1966, overdubs 1972. With Pharoah Sanders, McCoy Tyner, Alice Coltrane, Jimmy Garrison, Charlie Haden, Elvin Jones, Rashied Ali, Ray Appleton, Ornette Coltrane, Jessie Chapman, plus string section.

Alice rewrites history, taking sessions by classic and post-classic groups, adding strings, organ, harp and ramboura, erasing Garrison on two cuts and inserting Charlie Haden (Music Liberation with a vengeance!). Regarded as a diabolical liberty at the time, this large-scale appropriation of the material seems less shocking after scratch music, sampling, Hendrix's *Crash Landing*, the *Bird* soundtrack. And the huge sound of *Infinity* is, it must be said, ravishing. At the very least, this is hipper than *Bird With Strings*, and could provide a useful toe in the water for newcomers scared to plunge straight into Late Coltrane. But think of the Coltrane sessions still not released, such as the quartet, with Marion Brown replacing Pharoah, recorded after *Interstellar Space*. Or the February 1966 concert recording where the Coltrane/Sanders frontline was augmented by Carlos Ward and the Ayler brothers (!). We still don't have the whole story, nor by a long way. *

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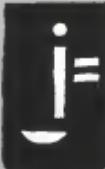
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Abdullah Ibrahim continued from page 19
something new."

Around here it seemed time for a question about why so many of Abdullah's hypnotic hymn-like melodies recur on several different albums. After his standard five-seconds pause for thought, he replied, "God says in the Qu'ran 'The blending of things is good'. If you make food, it's the blend. In flower arrangement, it's the blending of different flowers and different colours. The same applies to painting, the same applies to music.

"Within the music you inject a formula for a specific purpose, having in mind a specific effect. So, depending on what, how and who is involved, you use specific formulas. In some instances, you have what seems a very basic formula, and, in another situation, you will use what seems to be very eloquent language, but it's the same information . . . Most of the conflicts come, not through saying something right or saying something wrong, but saying the wrong thing at the right time or the right thing at the wrong time."

So now you know.

Highly Selective Discography

Dollar Brand. Round Midnight (Copenhagen 1965, Black Label)
African Space Programme (New York 1973, ENJA)
Voice of Africa (South Africa 1974/5, Kazi)
Abdullah Ibrahim: Echoes From Africa (Ludwigsburg 1979, ENJA)
Zimbabwe (Ludwigsburg 1983, ENJA)
Water From An Ancient Well (New York 1985, Black Hawk)

Michael Jackson

Michael Jackson continued from page 25

video for "Bad", he seems eerily like John Sayles's *The Brother From Another Planet*, with his voice that sounds like it's still breaking and a walk that looks rangy and uncomfortable when it can't break into a dance. He seems remote, an otherness, yet his huge popularity makes him a universal figure. In his book, *Moonwalk* – an as-told-to-story that might be as authentic as Billie Holiday's *Lady Sings The Blues*, but who cares? – he sounds angelically bemused yet unexpectedly tough and sometimes unforgiving. The unending speculation about his sexual preferences seems irrelevant in the light of his bizarre isolation. He's seen as a creator of light and lightweight music – how can *Bad* measure up in the brutal glare of a Public Enemy record? – for an audience too young to know better, yet the refinement and resonance of his records are much too knowing for that. Come to that, so is his business brain.

What this adds up to, perhaps, is the untempered mystery of a star. That kind of inexplicable allure never really existed in pop before Michael came along: icons like Presley and The Beatles were icons, but their frailties and hopes felt not so far removed from our own. Michael, for all his will to change the world by changing the man in the mirror, is far, far away. Even as his music is settled in amongst everything we have. *

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Dances With Wolfgang

• A Wire Consumer Guide •

200 years ago Mozart died in poverty and was buried in an unmarked grave.

Today he's hailed as the greatest composer who ever lived and new recordings of his music pour into the shops almost daily.

So how do you start a collection of essential Amadeus CDs without spending a fortune?

Graham Lock sorts out the hits and misses on four recommended budget-price labels and picks some personal Wolfgang winners.

Illustrative by Paul Schofield

"PERHAPS THE greatest genius in recorded human history," was the verdict of his biographer Hildeheimer on Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, composer/pianist/violinist/child prodigy, born in Salzburg in 1756, died of fever in Vienna in 1791, at the age of 35 (the same as Charlie Parker). When he died, Mozart was in debt and scarcely more popular or well-regarded (except by a few discerning judges, such as Joseph Haydn) than many other composers of the period. In his lifetime, Mozart's music was considered cold and cerebral – "so difficult, so critical, so full of art and containing little for the ear" ran a typical criticism; in short, he didn't swing! – while for much of the 19th century he was regarded as rather a frivolous composer.

Now the critical pendulum has swung back again – whether too far or not far enough depends, I suppose, on your personal aesthetics. Let's not waste time arguing about "greatest genius" or not: Mozart was, at the least, one of the finest composers to come out of the Western classical tradition, and if there's a degree of hype about the current bicentennial celebrations, what really matters is that this year's flood of CD releases and reissues is an amazing bonanza for collectors and newcomers alike. A real goldmine of bargains awaits – providing you know where to look.

Below, in part one, I've picked the four labels whose bargain- and mid-price Mozart releases are, I think, most value for money, and briefly indicated which are the best – and worst – buys in their catalogues. In part two, in the hope of whetting the interest of relative Mozart novices, I've also nominated seven favourite compositions which show the incredible range – formally and emotionally – his music encompasses; and which, coincidentally, offer a few intriguing glances into his life, times and changing reputation.

Most of the quotes come from Brigid Brophy *Mozart The Dramatist* (Libris, £9.95), Michael Levy *The Life And Death Of Mozart* (Cardinal, £5.99), H C Robbins Landon *1791 – Mozart's Last Year* (Flamingo, £5.99), Robbins Landon / Mitchells (eds) *The Mozart Companion* (Faber, £7.99), all of which are recommended reading, as is the hardback booklet

which comes with the single-CD sampler to the Philips complete Mozart Edition (£4) and which includes the Kochel (K) catalogue of Mozart's compositions.

Finally, a punter alert! Many of the CDs mentioned below, including some of the Philips multiple-CD sets, are still available in the shops in their previous incarnation as full-price editions, so make sure it's the cheaper issue you buy. And, since prices vary slightly from shop to shop, those given below are only approximate.

PART ONE – A GUIDE TO THE BARGAIN LABELS



DECCA's *The Mozart Almanac* series is the most imaginatively-presented of the current Mozart issues. It's a 20-CD set (CDs available separately, £8), with 16 of the discs each devoted to works from a single year in the composer's life. (Of the remaining four, volumes one and two cover his early years, 1763–74; volumes 19 and 20 both feature pieces from 1791, his last year.) Other pluses include attractive packaging, scholarly notes by eminent Mozartian H C Robbins Landon (though these are often extracts from his various books and do not always address the compositions on the disc) and a generous selection of works on authentic instruments, courtesy of Christopher Hogwood and the Academy of Ancient Music (in whose ranks Barry Guy earns his daily crust).

The selection of works, by Robbins Landon, is strong on the major symphonies, piano concertos and sonatas and the religious music: inevitably, there are also some controversial omissions, including the horn concertos, piano trios and – the most grievous absence – all but one of the string quartets. As for performances, Hogwood and AAM play brisk, slightly astringent versions of nine symphonies (including No's 29, 31, 34, 35, 39 and 40) and are especially powerful on the religious pieces, where they're joined by leading sopranos Emma Kirkby (on *Regina Coeli*, *Exultate Jubilate* and the *Requiem*) and Arleen



mozart

Augér (on a glorious version of the 'Great' Mass in C Minor).

I also enjoyed Andreas Schiff's graceful fluency on the four piano concertos and three sonatas he plays, while other outstanding performances include the Lupu/Goldberg *Violin Sonata K304*, Igor and David Oistrakh's *Duo for Viola and Violin K473*, the Vienna Mozart Ensemble's 'Haffner' Serenade and Anthony Pay's nicely understated version of the *Clarinet Concerto*. Chief among my dislikes were Vladimir Ashkenazy's self-consciously Romantic piano concertos, a rather dry *Clarinet Quintet* and the various opera extracts (I don't like extracts!).

top three buys

Volume 2 (1771-74) includes *Regina Coeli*, *Exultate Jubilate*, *Symphony No 29* (430 113 2)

Volume 11 (1783) includes 'Great' Mass in C Minor, *Duo for Viola and Violin* (430 122 2)

Volume 20 (1791) includes *Clarinet Concerto*, *Requiem* (430 131 2)



DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON initiated the Mozart reissue boom last year with a special set of 25 CDs entitled *Mozart's Masterpieces* (also available singly at £6 each), and they've since followed it with a set of seven mid-price operas and a recent edition of 25 more releases, the *Mozart 3D Collector* (all DDD recordings, £8 each). The first series is by far the most attractive with several winning performances by Karl Böhm, a mellow and mellifluous Mozartian, including a coupling of *Symphonies 29 and 35* (plus the darkly impressive *Masonic Funeral Music*), the 'Pastoral' Serenade, piano concertos with Gilels (No 27) and Pollini (No's 19 and 23) and a delightful CD comprising the *Clarinet*, *Oboe* and *Bassoon Concertos*. On the debit side there's the tacky yellow packaging, a lack of sleeve notes, exceptionally weak versions of *Symphonies 40 and 41* (by Abbado), more opera extracts and a sprinkling of works conducted by von Karajan, against whom I am seriously prejudiced because I think his interpretations lack all the charm, elegance and gaiety that are quintessential to Mozart.

The operas, each conducted by Böhm, are a mixed bag, with the finer performances coming on the lesser-known works; so the exotic *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, melodramatic *Idomeneo* and rather severe *La Clemenza di Tito* are the better buys, while *Le Nozze di Figaro* is also good, *Die Zauberflöte* enjoyable if less inspired and *Don Giovanni* definitely lacklustre. The one not to buy is *Cosi Fan Tutte* because the classic version, also by Böhm and also at mid-price, is the one on EMI (whose mid-price opera series also offers good bargains in Kleiber's *Die Zauberflöte* and Giulini's *Le Nozze di Figaro*). Again DG omit notes, but librettos plus a plot synopsis are included in the colourful presentation boxes. Expect to pay around £20 for the two-CD sets, £30 for the three-CD sets.

The *Mozart 3D Collector* is disappointing. My only recommendations here are the two volumes of violin sonatas by Itzhak Perlman and Daniel Barenboim, dramatic and gripping virtuoso performances. Once more the packaging is not

attractive – put all the CDs together and you get a giant face of Mozart! – and there are still no notes. Better to look at DG's regular mid-price labels for a few extra Mozart bargains, for example, the Andá piano concertos (No's 17 and 21) on Privilege or the recent Galleria issue of lovely clarinet and bassoon pieces, *Divertimenti für Bläser K439b*.

top three buys

Piano Concerto 26 & 27 Vassary (26), Gilels/Böhm (27) (429 810 2) *Clarinet, Oboe, Bassoon Concerto* Prinz, Turetschek, Zeman/Böhm (429 816 2)

Idomeneo Böhm (429 864 2, three-CD set)



NAXOS is the current success story among bargain labels, its low-cost Hungarian recordings and German manufacture allowing sales here at the super-bargain price of £4.10 per CD. Naxos has no special Mozart series but the label's general catalogue offers a wide range of Mozart recordings which, though variable in quality, does include several excellent performances. Three sets in particular stand out: the later symphonies, the piano concertos and the violin concertos.

The Capella Istropolitana, with conductor Barry Wordsworth, can't quite match the relaxed sparkle of Marriner and the ASMF (see below) but they bring tremendous flair and bite to their playing, and their five CDs of symphonies (No's 25, 27-36, 38-41) are sharp, feisty and well-balanced. I particularly liked their versions of 29, 31, 38 and 40, though be warned that, with three symphonies per disc, most repeats are not played.

More impressive still are the concertos by Hungarian pianist Jenő Jandó, of which five volumes have been released to date. Jandó is a wonderfully lucid player – you hear the piano, not the pianist. Light of touch, fleet of thought and with that extra pinch of zest, he uncovers the dazzling *jeu de main* that runs like a grain through so many of these concertos. Drama and tension – as in No's 20 and 24 – are given their due, and slow movements are wistful without being languorous. Concertos available to date are No's 9, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 27; perhaps he doesn't quite catch the full bloom of the latter (Gilels is the master there), but the others are vivacious, engaging and at times brilliantly alive.

Naxos's other outstanding soloist is the Japanese virtuoso Takako Nishizaki, now reputed to be one of the world's most-recorded violinists. Here, she sounds completely fresh on her three-CD series of violin concertos. (No 4 is coupled with the *Sinfonia Concertante* for Violin and Viola K364; the other pairings are No's 1 and 2, No's 3 and 5). The Capella Istropolitana are more warmly responsive to the baton of Stephen Gunzenhauser on the last three concertos than they are to Johannes Wildner on the first two; but Nishizaki is flawless throughout, buoyant and imaginative, her faster movements almost frisky, the slower singing with a tender lilt that never lapses into sweetness. The K364, with Ladislav Kyselak on viola, is also hugely enjoyable.

Jandó's set of piano sonatas and Nishizaki's of violin sonatas are also recommended. Many of the other Naxos issues are pleasant if unexceptional, but I positively disliked the *Requiem*, the CD of horn concertos (best buy here is the Baumann/Hattocourt mid-price set on Teldec) and almost everything conducted by the charmless Johannes Wildner – which includes, alas, Naxos's only bargain-price Mozart opera to date, *Die Fledermaus*. Packaging is modest (but not untasteful) and brief, pertinent notes are included. With some top-notch performances at bottom-rung prices, Naxos is the ideal label for newcomers to start exploring the Mozart repertoire.

top three buys

Symphonies 28, 31, 40 Wordsworth (8 550164)
Piano Concerto Vol 4 No's 23 & 24 Jandó (8 550204)
Violin Concerto No's 3 & 5 Nishizaki (8 550418)



WITH ITS sumptuous packaging, copious notes and roster of world-class artists, the PHILIPS *Complete Mozart Edition* – 45 volumes of multiple-CD sets at mid-price (£8 per disc) – is the *crème de la crème* of the Mozart series now on sale. The one drawback – you may think it a crucial one – is that the CDs are not available singly, so both newcomers and the less well-off could find some of the larger volumes of eight-, nine- and 12-CD sets a daunting prospect. In several instances, I would agree, but given a volume as definitive and as captivating as the Quartetto Italiano's set of complete string quartets . . . well, some things are worth missing a few meals for!

Still, I suspect you'd have to be a dedicated completist to want *all* of the early symphonies, serenades, divertimenti, dances and marches, masses, arias and early operas. I'd also hesitate over the 12-CD set of complete piano concertos (Vol 7) – Alfred Brendel, soloist on No's 5–27, is always highly intelligent but I found his playing a touch studied at times and was left feeling vaguely disappointed on a couple of the major concertos. Mitsuko Uchida's five-CD set of the piano sonatas (Vol 17) represents the apex of one strain of classicism: here is a severely formal elegance, which many will treasure but many too may find over-precious. Listen before you buy. Volume 19 has two gems in Peter Schreier's vivid account of the *Requiem* – a Gramophone award-winner – and John Eliot Gardiner's excellent version of the 'Great Mass in C Minor' (on original instruments); but this is a nine-CD set which includes 16 other masses, so it's likely to appeal only to the keenest fan of Mozart's religious music.

Which still leaves several volumes on which I'd happily blow a small fortune. Sir Neville Marriner and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields play the mature symphonies (No's 21–47, Vol 2, six CDs) with a blend of finesse and vitality that consistently beguiles; the Grumiaux Ensemble's reading of the string quintets (Vol 11, three CDs) is still the most authoritative of these neglected gems; the Quartetto Italiano's set of string quartets (Vol 12, eight CDs) remains unchallenged for

the unfailing intelligence and sensitivity of the playing; the Grumiaux Trio are splendid on the *Divertimenti* K563, centrepiece on Vol 13's two-CD set of string trios and duos; the Beaux Arts Trio have yet to be matched on their sprightly versions of the piano quartets and trios which comprise most of Vol 14's five CDs. In short, on the major chamber works the Philips team stands absolutely peerless.

Later in the summer come the early and unfinished operas, sensibly issued on two- and three-CD sets; then in the autumn Sir Colin Davis's highly-regarded performances of the major operas, sparkling, star-studded affairs, with *Le Nozze Di Figaro* (Vol 40) recommended.

top three buys

Vol 2: Symphonies 21–41 Marriner/ASMF (422 502 2)
Vol 11: String Quintets Grumiaux Ensemble (422 511 2)
Vol 12: String Quartets Quartetto Italiano (422 512 2)

PART TWO – SEVEN STEPS TO MOZART

Adagio and Rondo K617/Adagio K365 (617a)

Mozart's fascination with tone colour extended to a love of unusual instruments and in 1791 he composed two pieces for the glass harmonica, a kind of Heath Robinson arrangement of glass basins which, when their rims were rubbed with a wet finger, sang out notes. K617 was a quintet for glass harmonica, flute, oboe, viola and cello, K365 an adagio for solo glass harmonica: both pieces were written for the blind virtuoso Marianne Kirchgessner, who played the former at her London debut in March 1794. (The *Morning Chronicle* critic liked the music but complained that the glass harmonica wasn't loud enough!) From the instrument's peculiar wail, Mozart certainly fashioned a strange enchantment: Robbins Landon writes of K365's "unearthly beauty", Michael Levy of K617's "uncanny grave Adagio" and "magically tuneful yet plaintively ethereal Rondo". Through a glass darkly, indeed. (Beware of versions which substitute piano or celeste for the glass harmonica.) Best buy: Bruno Hoffman, included in Philips Complete Mozart Edition Vol 14, 422 514-2 (mid-price, five-CD set).

Fantasia in C Minor K475

"In the fantasias, Mozart suggests his great powers as an extempore player," (Arthur Hutchings, *The Mozart Companion*.) Even the most ardent advocate of authenticity seems happy to gloss over the question of improvisation in the classical repertoire. Yet we know that Mozart and Beethoven were great – and public – improvisers, that cadenzas were often improvised solos, that fantasias such as K475 were supposed to be played with, at the least, an improvisatory *feu* – there's even a contemporary account of Mozart playing a fantasia, without a score, "in which he was infinitely brilliant, displaying all the force of his genius". So the strict adherence to the score with which an ultra-classicist such as Uchida performs this piece is really a bad joke. Best buy: none, unless Marilyn Crispell or Cecil Taylor record it.

continues on page 73

travels in the bush of ghosts

Byronic bridges? As his new 'opera' *The Forest* and latest Brazilian compilation

Forró go public, David Byrne's wild, wild life – from top Talking Head to film

director, maxologist and baba guru – is scanned by Mark Sinker

animals think they're pretty smart

DATELINE: ZURICH, 1916. The Cabaret Voltaire, and Hugo Ball – the original dada sorcerer – is hurling out spells, to counteract the evil new banalities of life during (world) wartime. Spells written in meaningless words, spells derived from a dadaist idea: that reciting made-up "negro poems" (to made-up "rag-time" rhythms) is a way of throwing the whole of "primitivism" – as a challenge – in the face of Western Civilisation.

Western Civilisation is not listening, too busy proving itself as barbaric and mindlessly violent – as "primitive" – as the most dishonest cartoon version of this or that non-western civilisation. Ball's lyric – "bollaka bollala/anolgo bang/blago hung/blago bang/basso fatakal/ii ii" – doesn't translate (that's the point) but supposing it did, it would mean, *If this is evolution, we want out*.

"It's indicative of our era," wrote the *New Yorker*'s rock critic Mark Moses, reviewing Talking Heads' last LP, *Naked*, "that art-rockers are now pilfering Third World rhythms and band configurations instead of European classical bombast, as they did in the early 70s." Superficially, *Naked* – recorded with a crack crew of African session musicians – probably comes across as nature-envy/African/wannabe sentimentality: "we used to microwave – now we just eat nuts and berries," sings leader David Byrne in "(Nothing But) Flowers". But the session-men were based in Paris, where they churn out the highest would-be Western consumerist cosmopolitanism of the best African dance-music. And Byrne sounds anything but happy about his new Eden: "If this is paradise, I wish I had a lawnmower."

If you want to understand, go back to the beginning. Better still, a little bit after that: the end of the beginning. The third Heads LP (the first to mention "nuts and berries" – with the same mixed feelings) is *Fear Of Music*, a record which begins with congas, "I Zamba", and intimations of a made-up Africa.

The Forest is Byrne's new solo LP, an orchestral meditation

on being modern and not being modern – "we're living and breathing in a new world, while thinking and feeling in an old one", as he says in his notes for it. "The music for *The Forest* is unlike anything I've ever done before. I wanted somehow to evoke the romantic feelings of the period in which the story has been re-set, the mid-1800s. I've tried to write music that draws a lot from the romantic composers of that period." But it begins – or more precisely, the first part, "Ur", closes – with a device which Byrne hasn't used for ten years, which no romantic composer ever used, a device that – you might think – expresses Byrne's deepest aims, so expressively does his extraordinary yodel roll out. He's singing in a language that doesn't exist.

Or as he put it long ago: "A bum here glassala gladridele glassala taffin I ZIMBRA . . ." On the label of *Fear Of Music*, the writing credits to that first song read D Byrne/B Eno/H Ball. *If this is evolution . . .*

the name of this man is david byrne

ON REMAIN IN LIGHT (another LP with a perfect title), Eno had thrown open a huge, glowing, overcharged Africa-scape of the mind for the Heads to, well, gladride through. But they parted company with the Ambient One after *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts* – which first put the idea of found percussion and sampling (maniac preachers, savannah radio, wildlife) into the mainstream: their next three LPs (*Speaking In Tongues*, *Little Creatures*, *True Stories*) all had their moments – except *True Stories* – but shunning oblique strategy (Eno's best gift to anyone), they came across as increasingly smugly self-limited, exhausted by their own success.

After all, they'd changed not just the way a pop group could look, but everything else – its possible sense of identity, its modes of operation. Without guile and without guilt their nervy-serene child-adult art-primitive driver had steered – in flight from or in search of home – through PopArt psychopunk, loft bubblegum, minimalism naïf and widescreen



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ethnodelia: but always keeping with him the same, singular, flexibly able group, which adapted its abilities to its leader's many projects.

But by the time they reached and refined *Naked*, it was obvious that even shimmerring Africas of the mind could be colonised and tamed by the mediocre — that their virtual landscape had been trashed. The unholy coming together of the Live Aid Pop Aristocracy and Eno cast-off Daniel Lanois, honeying up adult rock everywhere, rubbished it. Byrne still signalled his deeply complex relationship to the Fabulous Uncivilised Other, still wore his special passport to the Outlands on his sleeve, but no one cared anymore. The last song before *Fear Of Music*, "The Big Country," had a line we began to believe applied: "I wouldn't live there if you paid me —"

more songs about blago bungola boo

THE FOREST really is David Byrne reinventing himself, shedding the fiddly, fidgety glibness of his recent work, turning back to draw on all the resources the New York Artworld can provide: fallible resources, to be sure, but still Byrne's roots. *The Forest* places him, once again, in huge space — once again with a collaborator whose craft punches light into Byrne's near-aesthetic sensibility. Ten songs without words for history's lost cities: Ur, Kish, Dura Europus, Samara, Nineveh, Ava, Machu Picchu, Tula, Tootihuacan, Asuka.

It began life as a theatre piece, co-written with Robert Wilson, for performance in Berlin in 1988. Since the mid-60s, Wilson's huge dreamlike anti-narrative pieces have stood as a kind of spectral guardian of the best possibilities of New York Art. His collaboration with Philip Glass, *Einstein On The Beach*, was a landmark: it made Glass's reputation (and — nor Wilson's fault — gave Glass the opportunity never to live up to its promise since).

Byrne's Conceptual Art roots are darker than the blond, bland music he's tricked himself, for years, into making (in the wake of his genuinely excellent Brazilian compilations, his "Brazilian" solo record, *Rei Momo*, was famously ho hum). Always cannier — at reversing these polarities (forest/city, nature/culture, us/them) in unexpected ways — than he first appeared, he's never lost this knack. He just couldn't quite make it *matter* any more.

The early 80s New York avant garde music scene had been a potent crossover melt: with Material, Defunkt and the Contortions all chasing an "art" that wasn't, couldn't be, exclusively of or for this or that race or community. But that could only work if all communities kept their confidence in their own contributions. Byrne's work, with all its minor triumphs and genuine teach, came across to a large extent throughout the 80s as dominated by retreat from critical thought, a search for a pure body-language. People continued to accuse him of "being too intellectual" — the problem was actually precisely the opposite. He'd lost faith in bodytalk's coded intelligences: even as he celebrated it, in all its complexity, he seemed — by the way he walked — somehow to be talking down to it, betraying what he knew to be the facts in the case.

"The 'lightness' of much Brazilian pop," he'd written in the sleeve notes to *Beleza Tropical Brazil Classics One*, "is often mistaken or confused for American middle-of-the-road radio ballads. We have come to associate lightness, subtlety and easy rhythms with shallowness and music without guts." The point about the Tropicalismo movement which had thrown up performers like Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso was — once again — that they were as well-versed in Cage, Warhol and dada (Sao Paolo was the birthplace of Concrete Poetry) as well as The Beatles and The Stones, as in anything "purely" Brazilian. They were hungry, cosmopolitan arthards, in love with pop, but driven to inhabiting it because their government allowed no other political outlet.

Perhaps Byrne would have won few friends by emphasising that Latin pop is actually more "difficult" (in the sense that early Heads-music was "difficult") than its standard Anglo dismissal assumes: that there's far more to it than a kind of awayday tropical muzak. But when he was himself no longer so guilelessly/guiltlessly happy being smart AND funky, there was little chance of hipping anyone else to the same.

UR . . .

"I'VE SEEN sex, and it's all right." Those mid-80s records should have been hymns to the dreamy ecstasy of domesticity in a perfect world: what life would be like if one day we came home and everything in the world was all right after all. His Latin tinge should have about adult possibility. But he always seemed to be pointing at some "them" of his own devising (Texans or lovers or the whole Third World), and saying *LOOK! They're just like children, and SO SHOULD WE BE.*

We didn't need a "them" to imitate (especially one only he could see) — we needed an "us" again. *The Forest* — "a poem on death" — wants to say that the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh and the Industrial Revolution are both still our story, the deep furnaces of our day-to-day mythologising, which we love and return to, in spite of everything. What matters isn't its message. What matters is what it connects with what (orchestral music, heightened by systems process, as the uncanny host of modern machine culture, our ideas about "progress, work, . . . sex, love and the spirit").

... that's it

IF YOU want to understand, go back to the beginning. Better still, a little bit after that: the end of the beginning. It's 23 December 1979, the very lip of the 80s (a decade whose direction the Heads will have as much influence over — with Eno's help — as they'll have problems escaping). *The South Bank Show*: Byrne, a stuttering head on a twitchy body, is trying to explain why he likes New York: "It's the kind of place where you see anything, y'know. Just looking out the window, you see people, uh, falling over! No one gives a damn. It's great." (Cities: there's good points, and bad points. Cities: starting — like many of Byrne's sentences — with *Ur*. "*Ur*" is the name of the first piece of music on his new LP *The Forest*.) *

El hath no fury

... Not now he's all grown up.

Barney Hoskyns meets a giant of contemporary songwriting and wonders,

Is Elvis still The King?

Photo by Eric Richmond

"WHEN YOU get old it's like they go to the file for the opinions on you", said Elvis Costello last time he was on the interview treadmill. "It's like, oh, another fucking record by Four Eyes."

Well, Four Eyes has gotten even older and here we are again trumming through the file for the word on pop's King Woodsmit - the consensus on one of our few genuine post-punk Elder Statesmen. When someone's gone this far into a pop career it's hard to sort out your own gut reactions to his latest opus from the multitude of views which have hardened around the body of his *owee* like calluses. Didn't the German poet Rilke say that fame was merely the sum of all the misunderstandings that gather about a name?

A day or so after my rummaging, Elvis Costello will say things to me like: "Writers are worried they'll look stupid if they don't have a definite opinion" and: "It's your job to try and make sense of pop music - to someone working in their own career it's of little consequence and even less interest". And I will feel that familiar uneasy shame about what I do, the abject inferiority a leech would feel if it only knew it was leeching.

In the meantime I continue my attempt to make sense of 'Elvis Costello'. (Still such a preposterous monicker for misunderstandings to gather about: is one seriously supposed to address this singularly un-Presley-like man as 'Elvis')? How far Declan MacManus has come from the scrawny, psychotic nerd



of 1977, that bespectacled bank clerk playing Johnny Rotten in a suburban bedroom mirror. How riddled with infuriating contradictions his musical trajectory has been: bile versus tenderness, violence in tandem with craft, contempt for and fascination with America. But how – after all of it, after 15 albums – how deeply entrenched he is now as a certified musical giant, a singer-songwriter *austral* in the Q-venerated line of Dylan and Van and Joni and Neil and Lou and all the other truculent geniuses of the Compact Disc age. ("This is what Charlie Murray says," Costello will tell me. "He says there's this Mavericks' Club and I'm the youngest member." –

THE TROUBLE is, there seem to be two distinct Elvis Costellos out there in the amorphous world of contemporary pop discourse. One is the "prestige artist" who made his Warner Brothers debut two years with *Spike* and now follows it up with *Mighty Like A Rose*. The other is the tormented, belligerent frontman of Elvis Costello & the Attractions, one-time music-press Sacred Cow and a man who would rather be seen dead than recording in Los Angeles or consorting with the likes of Paul McCartney. This latter is the Costello we can't quite let go of, the voice of our alienated youth and our Dylan-esque disaffection with modern romance, culture, politics. It's the Costello who came back from *King Of America* to make the thrillingly raw *Blood And Chocolate*, the Costello of the frantic electric grunge only Nick Lowe could ever get on tape.

Mighty Like A Rose, despite being originally intended as another Elvis & The Attractions record, confirms what *Spike* intimated: that Costello is indeed, in the words of one of its 13 songs, "All Grown Up". It's the music of a man who has detached himself from his past, whose records have become Americanized amplifications of what he would call his earlier "blueprint" songs. In his impatience with the limitations of The Attractions as "a rock'n'roll band", Costello has forsaken simplicity and authenticity in the pursuit of intricate, "musicianly" sounds and arrangements, courtesy of another stellar lineup of super-sessionmen. What he has also sometimes forsaken is whatever was real in his overly self-conscious, unavoidably clever-clogs songs. "The Other Side Of Summer", released in late April, was Costello at his glibbest. With the crude irony of its Beach Boys pastiche – replete with original Brian Wilson keyboard man Larry Knechtel – this 'anti-summer' summer record about the "poisonous surf" and the nightmare of the Californian dream only succeeded in irritating. The rest of the collection moves rather vaguely from apocalyptic black comedy ("Hurry Down Doomsday") and seething resentment ("How To Be Dumb", inspired by Attracion Bruce Thomas's-on-the-road novel *The Big Wheel*) to the mystical, Sinead O'Connor-style resolution of "Broken". Probably the most affecting, least affected track on *Mighty Like A Rose* is "Sweet Pear", a song unashamedly derived from the music of that extraordinary group The Band: if anyone ever uses the melodic quirks of Robbie Robertson and the voice of Richard Manuel as springboards to a more beautiful song I

shall be very surprised.

It is not, let me emphasise, as if *Mighty Like A Rose* isn't choc-full of lovely details, ingenious twists and turns. Fiachra Trench's string and woodwind arrangement for "All Grown Up" haunts me for days after I first heard it. The production on the McCartney-co-written "So Like Candy" is shimmeringly sensuous. And co-producer Mitchell Froom's mini-museum of quaintly antiquated keyboards is used to brilliant effect on the closing "Couldn't Call It Unexpected No 4". Then there are all the customary Costello quotes and in-jokes: apart from The Band and The Beatles and The Beach Boys, there's anathemic "Rolling Stone" Dylan on "How To Be Dumb", maudlin Leonard Cohen on "After The Fall", even a tease of the "Oliver's Army"-era Attractions on "Georgie And Her Rival". (Larry Knechtel seems to have been under orders to mimic Steve Nieve throughout the record.) But Costello's musical conceits have become every bit as bitchy as the post-Confederates aggregations he puts together in the studio: bits of the old Spectre/Brian Wilson session army, bits of the Tom Waits band and the Dirty Dozen brass folk, bits of that other Elvis's old guitar man. He may say he hires these backroom legends for "what they can do now, not because I'm hoping some of that old magic might rub off", but it's hard not to feel Costello the fan has somehow assembled a big-budget soundscape out of the innovations of others. Even he admits he's "a magpie".

You will appreciate that it is not without a certain trepidation that I enter the Portobello Road pub where I'm due to meet the great man. At first I don't even see him. I see a shaggy-haired, tramplike figure at the bar but I don't see Elvis Costello. Then I realise the tramplike figure is Elvis Costello, his features cleverly obscured by a beard, long reddish-brown hair, and dark granny-glasses. Immediately it's clear that he is tired. He's been up half the night working in true workaholic style on the music for some *Edge Of Darkness*-style TV thriller, and tomorrow he's up at five again to fly to Hamburg.

IT'S THE press who get an early blast of flak once we're seated in an empty cafe on Notting Hill Gate. "On the last record I got a lot of 'oh, it's eclectic' from interviewers and I thought, surely you can do better than that. It's obvious that it's eclectic. The question is 'Why is it eclectic?'" I decide against telling him that, eclectic or not, I don't know many people who listened to *Spike* more than five times. As for *Mighty Like A Rose*, I hedge my bets by reserving an opinion till the record has been fully digested.

"From my point of view you've got to look at the record as a whole. Obviously people are initially going to be drawn to the songs with the biggest tunes or the ones they identify with most, which are often the aggressive ones, but the album does move towards some sort of positive conclusion."

"Aggression" is one word for "How To Be Dumb"; 'spleen' might be another. The song seems a pretty vicious form of revenge for the unflattering portrait of 'The Pod' in *The Big Wheel*.

"Look, whatever triggered that song, you have to have a bit more wit than just to let yourself descend into a rant. If you stop at the first thought you have on the matter then you're selling yourself short as a writer and you're definitely selling your audience short. So for me this song is much more universal. There are always people who want to know whether this or that song is about x, y, or z. I couldn't care if Bob Dylan is singing about his wife or his dog, what's important is whether or not it's a good song. It's sometimes good to let your frustration out and then turn it into something else, but . . . to be honest, if there are references to Bruce's book in this song then I wish Bruce could have turned *his* frustration into something a bit more creative than *The Big Wheel*, which is a whingeing memoir masquerading very badly as a novel."

Thomas comes in for more mud-slinging when I raise the subject of the original intention to cut *Mighty Like A Rose* with The Attractions.

"I wanted to do the record with them from a musical point of view, but when they showed their true colours about the financial side of things and several other aspects of it I was kind of glad I didn't get trapped in a recording studio with them, because it obviously wasn't what they really wanted to do, it was just seen as the opportunity to get a payday they'd felt themselves denied before. If they hadn't been so avaricious, too, they could have had a much better crack at success in America than we ever did when we were on *Columbia*."

The decision to use instead the core of the musicians he'd employed on *Spike* – Attractions drummer Pete Thomas among them, it should be pointed out – came out of the two weeks Costello had spent with them at Eddie Grant's studio in Barbados, cutting an album of his favourite r'n'b and rock'n'roll songs. His very own *Rock'n'Roll or Monday Matinee*, one might say, though he's keeping quiet about the track listing.

"I hope that album will see the light of day, despite the fact that the record business is obviously not geared to theme records like that, the way it used to be. I mean, to me, Sam Cooke's *Night Mood* is just as good a record as any of his pop albums, but an equivalent type of artist these days would have a hard job convincing his record company of that. I think it's called 'endangering the product identification'. I'm lucky that my comparative lack of commercial success allows me the freedom still to do things like this. Apart from anything else, I really wanted to get some rock'n'roll cuts with James Burton playing. He did a little bit of picking on *King Of America*, but not really too many breaks."

Piecing this motley all-star band together in L.A. once the Attractions idea had fallen through proved surprisingly easy. For Costello, moreover, it proved to be another experience of freedom and flexibility.

"Once you get out of the idea of being in a band, you start to build up relationships with a pool of musicians. You don't have the same responsibility to one another but you do have a rapport and you can call one another up anytime. These last two records have been musically much more involved than anything I'd done before, and in the long run I think they're

the better records for having that little bit of variety. I emphasise that I'm not putting anybody down, despite whatever ill-feeling there may be, I just do genuinely think that for most of these songs these particular players have done a job that couldn't have been done by the other people."

When I press Costello on the point that many people see the new "variety" of his music almost as a defection he becomes noticeably tetchy.

"Someone asked me why I thought the Dylan bootleg box set had a 1966 picture of him on its cover when it spans a 30-year career. There's no denying that to some people that is the most resonant image of Bob Dylan. Now, you can see that I don't give a damn about that aspect of things. If I've got to worry about looking like some ageing photograph of myself at 22, then that's more than I can deal with. But the same thing applies musically. Doing something like a *Blood And Chocolate*, which was sort of saying 'I now return to the way I thought before', was obviously a very conscious decision to be musically limited. It was like pretending we knew only three chords. What it didn't mean was that I had to continue to be limited to that for the rest of my life."

He's tetchier still when I dare to suggest that the British pop scene has lost the reverence it had in the 80s for the Songwriter-as-Genius. Anonymous dance technicians and interchangeable neo-60s bands are in, Tanita Tikaram is out.

"I don't pay attention to that. I don't buy records. I have all the records I could possibly ever need. It's not like I've lost interest in music. Occasionally I hear a record I like, and it's often some quirky dance record, but I never bother to buy it because I figure by the time I've worked out what it is it'll probably make me sick. You see, I don't think about where I fit in because I don't have to think about where I fit in. I just do what I do, and if this album gets a massive thumbs-down then I'll just have to assume that the purpose of music has changed forever."

Perhaps the purpose of music *has* changed forever. Does pop need Great Men like Elvis Costello anymore, or is it only old-timers threatened by the antics of the Groovy generation who clutch at such venerable mavericks for some spurious guidance or enlightenment? As Costello talks his way through his new record, an album already hailed as a masterpiece by *Q*, it occurs to me that the problem of Elvis in 1991 is simply this: that as he has "filled out" – physically, intellectually, stylistically – so the precise contours of his musical persona have blurred. For pop culture he no longer embodies that runty malcontentedness we so desperately needed to hear through the 80s. He is not quite Sting, thank God, but then nor is he quite deranged enough to intrigue us as Bob Dylan does. Is he not really just another Official Dissident, a respectable irrelevance?

"If the contented note on which the album ends is just a consequence of being older, happier, and more settled," Elvis Costello is saying as we wrap up the interview, "then so be it."

Being older, happier, and more settled myself I cannot argue with him.

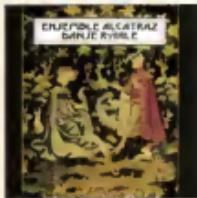
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soundcheck



Q: Why did the funky chicken cross the road? **A:** To egg on another DJ, Rufus Thomas, as he thinks about signing for Stax.

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NAT ADDERLEY QUINTET

*

Talkin' About You

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Thus, I guess, is the Cannonball Adderley Legacy Band — featuring altoist Vincent Herring — referred to in Barry Witherden's piscine live review (*Wire* 8/2/3). And somehow it really seems like the clock has been put back, in the nicest way. Oisin Keennews is back in charge of the date, and introduces the band on the sleeve. Nat is playing strong, mellow corner once again, after a doubtful period including some poor dates with the Paris Reunion Band. Walter Bockler and the great Jimmy Cobb (both one-time Cannonball sidemen) bring up the rhythm. Finally, there's three (lesser-known) numbers from the repertoire of Cannon's quintet — Vic Feldman's "Azule Serape", Jimmy Heath's "Big P", and Eddie Vinson's "Arriving Soon".

The title-track plus "Plum Street" are funk-laden Nat Adderley originals, and the date is completed by two standards, the Fields-McHugh "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" and Harold Arlen's "I'll Wind". But it's the contemporary influence of the two younger members of the quintet that foretells a time-warp. The dissonant, ele-gante voicings and rhythmic fluidity of pianist Rob Bargad show how playing "in the tradition" has developed. Piano in the era of jazz-funk and "soul jazz" — Horace Silver, Bobby Timmons — was a simple, rather functional affair, effective for all that. But there's a different level of sophistication here in Bargad's fine, swinging playing. No excuse for not calling up the piano-tuner,

though (the C and D above middle C are a bit of a bummer).

Finally, the alto-player; or rather, alto-players. Maybe it's churlish to say it, but Max Harrison's pigeon-holing of Cannonball as "a manor disciple of Parker" always seemed correct, the effect of his energies on such as *Kind Of Blue* batheric (despite Miles's approbation). Vincent Herring is, on this reckoning, a player of greater interest and potential — his piercing, impassioned intensity forcing a middle way between Cannonball's irrepressibly optimistic brightness and Jackie McLean's searing, acidulated sourness. A compelling foil to Nat's more straight-ahead corner, a memorable encounter, and a happy groove. ANDY HAMILTON

wire winner: very big band



CARLA BLEY

*

The Very Big Carla Bley Band

Watt 23 CD

TOWARDS THE END of the 80s some critics — though not the paying punters — got quite frosty towards Carla Bley's Sextet. This album demonstrates why The Very Big Band seems to have restored the esteem she previously enjoyed.

At the Band's Hackney Empire concert last October Carla was announcing that "that's not what it's gonna be like, that's just big band music" (after "United States") or "no, that wasn't it either" (after "Strange Arrangement"). This album features most of the Hackney programme (in the same order) and a very similar personnel, and was recorded in Ludwigsburg just a few days later. I was never really clear why those two pieces

were singled out for disavowal, although "United States" is a relatively straight big band — rather than *orchestral* — piece, giving an outing to all the instruments.

Apart from "Lo Ultimo", the track most likely to appeal to those who only know Bley's Sextet music, all the charts were written in the few months before the tour with specific musicians in mind, particularly trumpeter Lew Soloff, trombonist Gary Valente and saxophonists Andy Sheppard and Wolfgang Pushnig. If you missed the brass and reed textures in the Sextet there is plenty of opportunity to savor them here, from Valente's superb, turbo-charged trombone to Roger Janotta's flute, oboe and clarinet.

Although the seriously quirky Carla of the early compositions peaks out from time to time in a turn of phrase or a characteristic interval this is a showcase for virtuoso playing from featured soloists, notwithstanding the Hackney protestations. Whatever, it sounds real good to me. BARRY WITHERDEN

wire winner: solo



PETER BROETZMANN

*

No Nothing

PMP 32 CD

THE LOW registers are also the most neutral registers — at least until Peter Broetzmann agitates and then animates them with the huge force of his character. Away from Last Exit, his small group concerns, big band noises and the recent duets with his guitar playing son Caspar, Broetzmann comes across like the wounded savage of one of this set's titles. Wounded, perhaps, because nobody else is present to play or compete with

him. Well, if no one's at home to him tonight, there's always the elements to take on. Whatever the context, Broetzmann stays Broetzmann forever, and forever may he remain so.

Wounds don't slow Broetzmann down any. Nor do they bring on self-pity or self-reflection. Broetzmann displays his sores out of bravado — out for both pity and laughs. With titles like "Pig Man" and "Death In Lover's Lane" he often frames pieces as self-parodic brute comedy. On "The Stallions Of Blood", Broetzmann's tarotaro is a fabulous, if pitiless, register-bursting oriental bray. On "Man Is To Man A Beast" Broetzmann blows on the Broezophone like Broetzmann knows. And Broetzmann is of course so commanding a presence he gets it everywhere. But every so often the beast in Broetzmann gets lonely and he rends the foul night shuddering him with bellowing big burs, all the more heartbreaking for it being pitched high from the mouthpiece of machines made to grumble low.

Broetzmann, serious for a moment, quotes Wilde on his Broezophone: ALL ART IS QUITE USELESS. Quite. All art is useless. But nobody knows better than Broetzmann that it is all the artist has got to leave his stain on the world. And as he wrings the truth out of the statement for what it is worth, Broetzmann shapes out of art's impotent roar his parent, bursing, almost uncontrollable self. On the 10 minutes plus of "No Nothing" itself, he shows he is still growing as much as he is growling.

Even if in the end he fails to seed the future, the Broetzmann bear will take a hell of a lot of killing before his noise falls still. A considerable victory for the uselessness of art.

BIBA KOPF

wire winner: soul

JAMES BROWN

*

Star Time

Polydor 849108 CD/MC

JAMES BROWN's recording career began in 1956 in a typically extreme way: with just one word — "Please!" — sobbed seven times in a row. It was nine years before most British

listeners got to hear "Please Please Please" (covered by The Who on their debut LP) — by which time James Brown already had a brand new bag.

"The first nine years of my career were good," he writes in the 64-page booklet accompanying this four-CD/cassette retrospective, "but it wasn't enough. That's when I hit on 'Papa's Got A Brand New Bag'. It was a slang that would relate to the man on the street, plus it had its own sound: the music on one-and-three, the downbeat, in anticipation."

As this gorgantuan collection demonstrates, over the next ten years Brown honed that slang and that sound to a point where he created his own musical language. Songs like "Get Up (I Feel Like Being A) Sex Machine" and "Give It Up Or Turn It A Loose" broke every rule. The rules were bizarre. There was no structure except for the groove, which would change at Brown's whim. The songs were about themselves — apart from the constant grunts and screams, and a repeated title line, Brown's vocals would consist of a running conversation with his band: "Now horns, lay out! Awright! Now when I say 'Ugh!' I want you to hit me one time! Do you hear me? (Yeah!) Jabo, do you hear me? Ready? Ugh! Hit me now!"

The music was mesmeric, self-absorbed, each instrument locked into a sinuous machine. The JBs were musical jocks, with Brown as both coach and quarterback, and they had all the grace, power and tunnel-vision of great athletes. It's irresistible to compare Brown with Muhammad Ali: the towering ego that was the key to his success, the assumption of black responsibility and, later, the sad spectacle of the champion losing his touch. To its credit, the booklet doesn't try to hide Brown's faults. And best of all, it gives recording details and personnel for all 71 tracks.

Thus you can hear for yourself the difference between the horn-right "Cold Sweat" group, with Maceo Parker on tenor; the guitar-based "Sex Machine" group, with Bootsy and Phelps Collins on bass and guitar; and the more relaxed "Payback" group, run by trombonist Fred Wesley (the team's MVP).

The first LP, *Mr Dynamite*, covers Brown's gospel soul phase — "Try Me", "I'll Go Crazy", "I Don't Mind", "Maybe The Last

Time", an hysterical heaven of incredible singing — with the sweeping strings of "Prisoner Of Love" making you wish he'd used an orchestra more often.

"Papa's Got A Brand New Bag" launches *The Hardest Working Man In Show Business*, with Brown's musical and personal revolution culminating in "Licking Stick" and "Say It Loud — I'm Black And I'm Proud" respectively. Then comes *Soul Brother No 1*, transfixing hardcore funk all the way through the much-sampled "Funky Drummer", "Mother Popcorn", "Super Bad", "Hot Pants" and all.

Finally there's *The Godfather Of Soul*, with the pure funk diet leavened by the wrenching anti-heroin ballad "Public Enemy No 1". Things come a little unstuck towards the end when JB goes disco on "It's Too Funky In Here" and dabbles in hip hop with Afrika Bambaataa on the only post-1980 cut, "Unity".

Presumably for contractual reasons, Brown's 1986 hit "Living In America" is absent. It would have rounded things off perfectly. Where "Unity" took him back to the streets of the African nation, "Living In America", which Brown performed in *Rocky IV*, presented him in all his all-American glory — from one extreme of the black American experience to the other.

PHIL MCNEIL

wire winner: pop



ELVIS COSTELLO

*

Mighty Like A Rose

Warner Bros 7599-26575 CDMOLP

In which Elvis is saying what the fuck do you want me to do? Being passed off for your

whole creative career isn't so debilitating. Mick Jagger made himself into a tycoon through dissatisfaction, didn't he? And here we still want songwriting's Last Angry Man to gratify and (re)model some weird amalgam of punk nutter, social assassin and romantic fool, and still deliver flawless bits of Beatle business on the side. No wonder Costello sounds sick to his soul. You chisel out the greatest songbook of modern times – and that's about 300 recorded songs long by now – and at your concerts people shout out for "Alison" like it was the only thing you did that they could ever remember (me, I wanted to ask for "White Knuckles" or "Tiny Steps", to see if & could remember those).

So Elvis has discovered that making a career is a picnic in the lion's den. It hasn't stopped him, even if he doesn't get hits like all his brethren are accustomed to by now. And that extended family is vast, from Paddy McAlon and Mike Scott and Ian McNabb and every other Anglophilic tunesmith on down. Rock doesn't pay debts, but it owes Elvis a bundle. Just as Lennon thought songwriting was nothing more than "Love Me Do" until he heard Dylan, so nobody could take mere pop hacker very seriously after *My Aim Is True* and *This Year's Model*. Writing, though, isn't enough for a busker and a pub-gig veteran. He wants chops, integrity, detail and weight, all of which are here in abundance, and he wants – and this is the greatest expectation – people to pay due mind to all of those things. *Spade* gave some people reason to write him off as an over-achieving bastard and leave him at that, but why give up on a player who released his greatest song – "Our Little Angel" from *King Of America*, the unhallowed masterpiece to end them all – a dozen years into a career that shames the work-rate and quality-control alike of his peers?

If there's a problem with *Mighty Like A Rose*, it's that it does sometimes sound worked to death. Like Tom Waits on his two unprecedent folk inventions, *Swordfishtrombones* and *Raw Dog*, the fine, radiant, scorching musicalness of it all sometimes closes off the listener from partaking of Costello's strange brew – pure potheen, pure bile duct, all headily redundant stuff. I don't care if The Attractions could have been more 'vital' for the continued health of Costello the agitator, the neurotic, the amorous war-

correspondent. Let him have his coterie of top-notch players to support him. Let his career sustain him. If there's enough of Elvis – the songwriter, the singer and performer – left in it, then that's enough for me. And there's more than enough in *Mighty Like A Rose*, a record you could well find remarkable.

MIKE FISH

wire winner: piano jazz



NIELS LAN DOKY

* * * * *

Friendship

Milestone MCD 9181-2 CD

NIELS LAN DOKY has a Danish mother, Vietnamese father and a distinctly American line in career management. His debut album, after some uncharacteristically difficult preface work with Joe Henderson, was breathtakingly self-confident. *Friendship* is (my count) his sixth, and by far the best to date. Some of the Berklee mannerisms have been rubbed off and there is less emphasis on technique qua technique. Unlike Timmy Smith, on whose recent *Standards* Lan Doky does piano duty, he has already proved himself in the set exercises. *Friendship* consists of nine originals, divided over two sessions in New York and at home.

The salty old girl wins out again. The Copenhagen band has a unity and a freedom which the more up-market New York session can't touch. They'll put up a blue plaque for Alex Riel in the Jazzhus when he moves on, he's perhaps the most underrated drummer in Europe and playing every bit as vividly as ever. NHOP's solo on "Friendship" is a small masterpiece. No horns, bar Ulf Wakenius' coaxes blizzards of sound from his guitar, a

style closer to Soo than to the more restrained Abercrombie who seems below par to me. Bill Evans (an "Endless Vision" only) and Rick Margitza do little more than blur the foreground, but Brecker, B. is highly impressive on his two cuts.

Lan Doky himself is hard to place. The opening Tyner tribute is far from "in the style of" and there are few other stylistic landmarks to steer by. Parently unwilling to go the obscure, dues-paying path, he has to march out he doesn't quite progress with the gloss on his guest-list. The writing is top-notch, with that telling illusion of familiarity that goes with a clued-in thematic sense. He's flying cabin class these days. He needs to emulate his ancestors, both sides, and push off into deeper and less certain waters. If he does that, he could be a legend.

BRIAN MORTON

wire winner: electro-improv

SIMON H FELL

* * * * *

Compilation II

Bruce's Fingers 8F 1 LP

LIBERAL IN ITS BORROWING OF TECHNIQUES AND IDEAS FROM FREE JAZZ AND 12-TONE AND CHANCE MUSIC, *Compilation II*, subtitled *Theme And Variation For Improvisers, Jazz Ensemble And Electronics*, is a remarkable piece of work. Its first movement sounds like a collision between Coltrane's *Ascension*, Roberto Gerhard's fission-fusion symphony *Collage*, and a runaway pinball machine. Then it opens out into a buoyant groove that could be favourably compared with Onnette's (unfairly) forgotten *Chappaqua Suite*. Solos throughout are terrific, ensemble playing is strong, the writing is episodic but there's still a central flow and coherent development. Production values are nothing short of unique. In short, we have a potential classic here . . . emanating from Haverhill, Suffolk, a place I associate chiefly with formidable Sunday dinners at my aunt's house (but that's another story).

Fell is a bassist/composer/electronics buffin, and the other soloists in the ten-piece band (which also includes cunningly deployed violin and cello) are saxophonists Pete

Minna, Charles Wharf and Alan Wilkinson, flugelhornist Martin Jones, and drummer Paul Hesson. I shall have to learn more about them. According to Ben Watson's pugnacious sleeve note, they share a "take this and shove it up your ass individuality". My own impression was of a simpler pleasure in expressive sound; the music seems celebratory rather than belligerent (which, again, makes Ornette an appropriate reference).

One of the music's most tantalizing aspects is its spatial depth. The ensemble is pushed around in the mix – at one point in "Part II" it seems to be marching past the window. The relationship of the instruments to each other also changes constantly, dubwise, and the electronic tapes, threaded through the work, react against the real-time improvising. Brilliant. How do I get hold of *Compilation 1*?

STEVE LAKE

wire winner: murray jazz

DAVID MURRAY OCTET

*

Hope Scope

Black Saint 120139 CD/LP

Thus is the band, brimming over with character and great good humour, that toured Europe last Autumn to great huzzahs. Definitely big fun. There's something almost *primal* about this band's jaunty swagger. Ralph Peterson's sardonically dancing beat makes one think of a more droll Ed Blackwell. He's the perfect drummer to drive this crew of rengaud, argumentative individualists. There's some hefty powerplay in the middle of this version of "Hope Scope" (compare and contrast with the more cerebral take on *Special Quartet*, reviewed elsewhere); battles breaking, chairs flying overhead, trombonist Craig Harris and growling trumpeter Rassul Siddiq duking it out, the other horns bawling. In the occasional clearing the eccentric pianist Dave Burrell is still trinketing in his corner, curiously untroubled.

"Lester" and "Ben" are homages to you-know-who (how about some praise for the living, for a change?), with Murray's tenor taking on the more easily-mimicked attributes of the stylists in question, but to his credit these portraits are never merely copies,

more an illustration of the way in which old ideas can be applied to the present. In each instance Murray's own solos, at first referential and reverential, become heated and entirely personal. The arrangement on "Ben", complete with wah-wah mutes, seems to hearken back to the days when Webster and Ellington were rocking out with Rex Stewart as on, say, "Subete Slough". "Lester", despite an "out" prelude from Burrell, conjures the bruised and world-weary Young of "Ghost Of A Chance" and adds, perhaps, some of the anger that the pre-modern saxophonist never had the chance to express directly.

Peterson's walloping "Thabo", a cheerfully ragged blast of hard bop, born to be a closing theme, serves that function. Altogether, a fine illustration of an exciting, enjoyable band in its prime.

STEVE LAKE

wire winner: classical



DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

*

24 Preludes And Fugues, Op 87

Hyperion CDA 66441/3 CD

SHOSTAKOVICH has long been one of my heroes because I know of no other artist who has given voice to such profound feelings of despair and bleakness and yet kept faith with his art. To still find meaning in musical form when almost every human value is being destroyed around you must take astonishing courage. The 24 *Preludes And Fugues*, Op 87 have been called his "personal diary", but they can also be seen as a reaffirmation of belief in music at a time when ill-health and political persecution had all but silenced him.

In 1950 Shostakovich attended the Bach

Festival in Leipzig and sat on the jury of the piano competition, which was won by the young Russian pianist Tatjana Nikolayeva playing Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. Back in Moscow, Shostakovich began composing his own cycle of preludes and fugues in tribute to Bach and he invited Nikolayeva to his apartment to play each piece as he wrote it. He started the set on 10 October 1950, finished it on 25 February 1951 and Nikolayeva gave the first public performance in December 1952. Thus began a friendship that lasted until the composer's death in 1975 and which convinced Nikolayeva not only of his artistic greatness but that he was too "a very sensitive man, a fantastic man", a man with "an enormous soul".

Shostakovich and Bach stand at the opposite ends of the formal and tonal continuum that comprises the Western classical tradition. If Bach's 48 is one of the great heralds of formal classicism, Shostakovich's 24 is possibly among its last, and noblest, swansongs. Who can say why Shostakovich chose that moment to pay tribute to Bach or why he chose to do it in this particularly demanding form? Perhaps he needed the inspiration of Bach and the challenge of meeting such strict formal constraints as antidotes to the crass propaganda pieces he was being urged to compose. In any case, the result is a masterpiece of solo piano music, a 'private' work that encompasses a tremendous depth and variety of emotional expression with incredible economy of means.

There's no space here to do justice to the pieces individually, but try the ethereal No 13 or the dark, dramatic No 14, No 21's exuberance or No 23's serene romanticism; listen to the majestic Passacaglia that opens No 12, the abstract, improvisatory feel to No 16's fantastical fugue, the massive climax to No 24, itself a masterclass in dynamics, which closes the cycle with – as Robert Matthew-Walker's excellent notes observe – a crash of "defiant triumph". Their cumulative effect is, of course, something else again. "The Preludes and Fugues is a work of great depth, of unsurpassed mastery and greatness," insists Nikolayeva. "They are 24 masterpieces, each with its own internal world."

This is the third time that Nikolayeva has recorded the cycle – the first, in 1962, was under Shostakovich's supervision – and this

1990 version, spread over a mid-price, three-CD box-set, is certain to stand for many years as the definitive performance. Now one of the Soviet Union's most revered pianists — she is, appropriately, a Bach specialist — Nikolayeva brings to the work not only her 40 years of experience and expertise but a particular and personal feeling for this music and its composer. Her touch, her choice of tempi, are impeccable; she plays with a grace, a fluency, a clarity that reveal both the scope and the coherence of Shostakovich's structural genius. Her sense of restraint is unfaltering, yet she never undersells the emotional power of the music. It is, in short, a 'classical' performance of a 'classical' work; it is, too, a great performance of a great work. Absolutely one of the records of the year.

GRAHAM LOCK

idealistic milieu of the period and make the point that these performances still sound with a vitality that's 'invincible to the teeth and claws of time'.

The Carter/Bradford group take their cue from Ornette Coleman's early 60s music — in fact, Bradford was Ornette's first-choice trumpeter but he preferred a regular teaching job in LA to starving in New York; Carter actually grew up with Coleman in Fort Worth. The links are apparent in the first few seconds, as a scudding ensemble line is followed by plaintive cries that float in and fro between sax and trumpet. The music makes its own spaces, the horns chasing tails of melody over the flexible rhythm section: Carter is impressively fluent on tenor, alto and clarinet, Bradford's mountful cadences and quicksilver runs add emotional weight and the ghostly echo of bebop. I particularly like the disconsolate beauty of 'Woman', the horns circling a central sadness, and the poignant call-and-response cuticles of 'Abstractions For Three Lovers'. But it's a joy to have all of this set back in circulation.

That applies too to *The Giant Is Awakened*, a disc which has acquired almost legendary status in its absence. The title-track tells you why — anticipatory flurries lead into a repeating (and very catchy) piano/rhythm riff that drives the sax up, up into stratospheric shrieks as the riff goes awry, dissolving first into a wild-eyed ostrich figure then to hard, ringing piano trills. This is compelling jazz, the momentum swept along by the two basses and Brown's drums while Blythe blows his heart out and Tapscott keeps going slightly crazy at the piano. The remaining tracks are less excitable but still intriguing (if a bit heavy on vamps). 'For Fans' is a brief, complex runaround in Herbie Nichols fashion; 'The Dark Tree' rises up a spiralling crescendo; 'Niger's Theme' rides a choppy, two-note swell.

You'll get a better idea of Tapscott's range as a composer on his solo albums for Nimbus, and his Art's newly-released, two-part *The Dark Tree* (set Face Licks) is ultimately a more satisfying meeting of musical minds. But *The Giant Is Awakened* has kept its edge, its rush, its askew leftfield energy that draws on Monkian trickery, Silver's drive and Andrew Hill's voodoo power. Besides, Horace Tapscott is an unsung genius of black creative music and he deserves your attention. Buy this CD, tell your friends; it's time we midgers woke up too.

GRAHAM LOCK

wire winner: live guitar

FRANK ZAPPA

★

The Best Band You Never Heard In Your Life
Zappa Records ZAP38 CD

A two-CD set culled from Zappa's 1988 tour: old songs and covers, omitting the political music-theatre of *Broadway the Hard Way*. Zappa is the original musical subvert, long before John Zorn, Eugene Chadbourne, Bitch Morris, Billy Jenkins. In rock, only Hendrix ever played so much guitar; in the classics, only Boulez wrote so many notes. His albums always pack sufficient commercial glossiness to alienate purists, finance the next project and fail to chart. Zappa is true West Coast hip.

The 1988 band was distinguished by a nonpareil horn section (Bruce Fowler — trombone, Walt Fowler — trumpet, Albert Wing — tenor, Paul Carman — alto and baritone) and the charts are great, giving an R&B roadshow fullness to the sound. The lyrics suffer from road fatigue in-jokes but with a band seeming like this, you forgive every blemish.

"Boleto" is better than Ravel could have dreamed; "Eric Dolphy Memorial Barbecue" hovers sterling Bruce Fowler over samples that put Knitting Factory experimentalists to shame; "Zomby Wool" is stonking. Evangelist Brother A West steps forth to argue, live-on-stage, with Zappa's demonic sound effects, the Devo-esque "Purple Haze"/"Sunshine Of Your Love" is an epic assault on ersatz revivalism that remembers the offier utopia of the originals; "Stairway To Heaven" blissfully crushes Led Zeppelin with a plastic reggae lilt and poking musical creativity. Disc one closes with a brace of *One Size Fits All* covers, a reminder of some great music, the lessons of the French timbral sorcerors — Stravinsky, Varese, Messiaen, Boulez — lovingly learned.

Zappa makes other music seem boxed-in. There is nothing else remotely like it. Yum. BEN WATSON

wire winner: jazz reissue



VARIOUS ARTISTS

★

West Coast Hot

Novus ND 83 107 CD

AT LAST, a reissue we actually need? *West Coast Hot* collects together on a single CD two long-deleted classics from the late 60s West Coast underground — *Call To The Festival* by the John Carter/Bobby Bradford Quartet, and *The Giant Is Awakened* by the Horace Tapscott Quintet, featuring Everett Brown Jr on drums and the young Arthur Blythe on alto sax. Novus fails to provide any data about the original issues — I think both records first appeared on Bob Thiele's Flying Dutchman label (and I'm guessing at the title of the Carter/Bradford LP) — but Stanley Crouch's liner-notes do evoke the militant,



JOHN ADAMS
Conducts American Elegies
 Elektra Nonesuch 97249-2 CD

THE NEAR-inaudible opening notes of Charles Ives's "The Unanswered Question" set the tone for this collection of *American Elegies*, performed by the Orchestra of St Luke's, and conducted by composer John Adams. Justly regarded as one of Ives's finest works, its elegant, brooding, mysterious soundscape is punctuated by typically Ivesian interventions, as in the argumentative discourse between flutes and strings.

It is paired with Adams's own arrangement for orchestra of five songs set by Ives, a curious but pleasant overlay of Adams's own, more sumptuous harmonic language on the original. They are sung by soprano Dawn Upshaw, whose voice (as she demonstrated on Barber's "Knowsle: Summer of 1915" in an earlier recording with this Orchestra) has an appealingly rich weight.

The remaining elegies are more diverse. Ingram Marshall's piece for tape and orchestra, "Fog Trips", is not strictly an elegy at all, but fits the atmosphere of the disc well enough. He sets up a dialogue between taped sounds – fog-horn, wind, water, birds – and instrumental passages, with dominance shifting back and forward.

Morton Feldman's tribute to his piano teacher, "Madame Press Died Last Week At Ninety", is disappointing. The repeated "cuckoo clock" motif quickly becomes irritating, and the piece itself, which lacks the density of much of his work, instead seems slight.

That cannot be said of Adams's "Eros Piano", a substantial homage to both Feldman and Takemitsu, which also develops from a simple motif, but in far more engrossing fashion. The piano part is superbly played by Paul Crossley, whose sympathy with contemporary music is always palpable.

KENNY MATHEWS

HENRY 'RED' ALLEN
World On A String
 Bluebird ND82497 CD/MOLP

I HAVE to thank Martin Gayford (see *Wire* 58/9) for turning me on to Henry 'Red' Allen, a splendid, splendid trumpeter. Born

in Louisiana in 1908, a near-contemporary of Louis Armstrong (in whose shadow he had, per force, to exist), Allen spent most of his career playing what could broadly be termed New Orleans music, yet he played it with such daring and invention that fellow-trumpeter Don Ellis headlined a *Down Beat* profile "Henry 'Red' Allen Is The Most Avant Garde Trumpeter In New York". And that was in 1965!

World On A String is a CD reissue of his famous 1957 sessions with Coleman Hawkins, a reunion of two old pals from the early 1930s Fletcher Henderson Orchestra who hadn't played together in 24 years. The other musicians on hand were Allen regulars, including trombonist J J Higginbotham, clarinettist Buster Bailey, pianist Marty Napoleon and drummer Cozy Cole. Hawkins, of



course, plays superlatively and the other soloists are on top form – check Napoleon's sprightly piano or Bailey's wailing clarinet – but invariably the solos that make you sit up with a start and wonder "what was that!" as they flash past your ear are Allen's. Ellis's article listed a few examples from Allen's amazing range of trumpet techniques – "bends, smears, half-valve effects, rips, glissandos, flutter-tonguing" – yet he rarely stays more than a sep or two from the melody line.

Allen's balled feature here, "I Cover The Waterfront", is rated by Gunther Schuller (in *The Swing Era*) as "one of the most magnificent extended trumpet solos of that or any period", and he's practically as good on all of the other tracks – "Love Is Just Around The Corner", say, or the slumming "I've Got

The World On A String". Allen sings, too, on four tracks, his light tones and curious phrasing a special delight on the blues "Let Me Miss You, Baby" and on a declamatory "St James Infirmary", where the horns burn and blaze with ferocious gusto.

This is wonderful music, played with such zest, conviction and sly fun it's impossible not to love it. Henry Allen died of cancer in 1967 and there's very little of his music currently available on CD: the headline on that 1989 *Wire* feature was "The Trumpeter That Time Forgot". The reappearance of *World On A String*, one of his very best sessions, is a great excuse to start remembering again.

GRAHAM LOCK

AMBITION LOVERS
Last

Elektra 7559-60981 CD/LP

THIS ALBUM is about more kinds of ambition than I could ever hope to understand. At least, I think that's what it's about. And it's allowed to be about love of one or more kinds because it's an album of poppy rawk which just happens to have been devised by a couple of serious players of clever and sometimes slightly difficult music (Arto Lindsay and Peter Scherer), continuing in the tradition that goes back at least as far as John Cale, whereby arty types tackle rock 'n' roll archetypes.

Nicely done, though. The title track, as if by Ted Hughes out of *Quincy Jones*, sets the prevailing mood of an ambivalent, doom-laden dirtiness hauled along by Scherer's virtuoso funk. There's plenty of wit ("It's gonna rain now/Like it does in book"), weirdness ("We don't have any relatives/But we got a kitchen full of ants") and wickedness (the sneering chorus on the vaguely naughty "Tuck It In") lurking in Lindsay's lyrics, which fortunately compensates for his occasionally underpowered singing. Purchasers of this recording will also get to sing along accurately to "Umbaharsuma". TOM CORBIN

JANE BUNNETT

Live At Sweet Basil

Dream CAN 9009 CD

FROM THE opening bouncy bass line, which

makes you gloomily expect the opening bars of a tune like "Spain" this disc foxes you — because what washes over this cheerful sounding lick is a sudden outburst of splashy Don Pullen piano chords, faintly off-pitch trumpet figures and then a switch into straight jazz time promptly ripped into by the fierce soprano of Canadian saxophonist Jane Bunnett. Bunnett has her share of Coltrane/Shorter soprano habits, but also a mixture of wild trills and unexpected bouts of fastidious deliberation even at high speeds that makes her occasionally sound like Steve Lacy playing in a neo-bop band.

The disc isn't quite a success because the tunes aren't very remarkable and Bunnett's Canadian trumpet partner Larry Cramer (who sounds like late 60s Miles with Don Cherry's off-night gropings) isn't crisp enough on some pretty brisk ensemble sections to make the writing sound better than it is on paper. Sometimes the session suggests a band divided down the middle — Pullen, drummer Billy Hart and bassist Kieran Overs operate as a vigorous trio throughout, with Pullen's typical mixture of rhythmic abstraction, arpeggios, and blend of flailing chords and neat, boppy ones being an impressive show in itself.

Bunnett has a lovely yodelling tone and secure, delicate pitching on flute (swirling a pastoral mists around "You Don't Know What Love Is", which is followed by a contrastingly flinty solo from Pullen), plays a soprano solo alternately blessey and pushky on the Ossietzky "In Dew Time" and makes a strong case for jazz panpipe soloing on "For Mercedes".

It's a very long record (70 minutes) and the tunes are nothing special. Bunnett, though, has got a career on her hands.

JOHN FORDHAM

PETE CHRISTLIEB / WARNE MARSH
Conversations With Warne
Cross-Cross-Jazz 1083 CD

This is a much more conventionally boppy and high-spirited set than Warne Marsh's 1969 *Ne Plus Ultra* (see below) and would probably suit newcomers to one of the most distinctive tenor saxophonists in jazz — a man who contrived to be unfashionable at virtually every turn in the fortunes of jazz and thus

remained one of the most underrated players ever to play the living daylights out of the music.

This 1978 session is also produced with a lot more presence and echo on it, so in combination with the more generally upfront style of both Marsh and Christlieb here, it's quite unlike the ghostly dances of Marsh's earlier work. This is a mixed blessing, because while it makes the session more palatable and familiar to those who don't know Marsh, it also adds window-dressing to a style that was successful precisely because it managed to express so much without waving its arms about.

Pete Christlieb, though he idolises Marsh and reflects the Tricanoire phrasing in his melodic shapes and rhythmic evenness, exhibits a ruggedness and occasional bluesiness



that echo such hot players as Dexter Gordon or Johnny Griffin at times. By this stage in his career, Marsh too was sounding gruff and has lost a certain amount of the eerie, hypnotic querulousness that had made his tone so unusual. A fast piece like "Get Out!" recalls the earlier muttering contrapuntal style the most, and the interplay between Marsh and Christlieb becomes so complex that they eventually fade the take, which is a pity. The pair's variations on "Willow Weep For Me" display far more cadences than this kind of cool style formerly stooped to, and both players use blues licks.

For all that, *Conversations With Warne* has a good deal of breathtaking improvising — but nor the atmosphere of ascetic preoccupation that made sessions like *Ne Plus Ultra* so memorable.

JOHN FORDHAM

MANU DIBANGO

Palysmik
Birei Production RSD 220 CD

DISTRESSINGLY, MANU needs gimmicks now. Not to ginger up his music — he's still Africa's master (non-SA) jazz saxman — but to break through the inattention that builds round anyone who once had a hit long ago. This means Simon Booch producing and MC Mello's Brix-rapping ("Later T's The Love Of Cameroun Rast"), to rub in last year's link-up with wiggling soccer superstar Roger Milla. Booch does a satisfactory job (not a patch on the widescreen Laswell explosion that rescued the feeble material on 1985's *Electric Africa* — the last time a Western streetwear fer him hatched a ride), and Dibango's controlled force and his chimes and his sax and his primary colour afro-funk orchestration are present and correct. The rap sounds one-dimensional and weedy, but it only takes up a part of one track (the in-between bits sound all the better for Mello's blandness, in fact).

It isn't *Waka Jaw*, but it proves the Soul Makossa man isn't a spent force. He just needs a less apologetic context.

MARK SINKER

WILLIE DIXON
Hidden Charms

Silversone QRE 513 LP/CD

WILLIE DIXON's Grammy-winning new LP takes him full circle, incorporating elements from the whole of his 45-year recording career into a mellow but magnificent self-portrait.

Dixon's previous attempt to erect his own memorial on vinyl — 1969's *I Am The Blues* — was a damp squib. Dixon was the greatest blues songwriter, but as a performer, he never had the raw power of Muddy Waters or Howlin' Wolf, and his own versions of "Back Door Man" and "Hoochie Coochie Man" simply sent the listener back to the originals.

Perhaps what that session lacked was a good producer. T-Bone Burnett's light touch suits Dixon much better. The material ranges from "Jungle Swing", an exotic novelty dazing back to Dixon's late 40s pop/hot jazz trio The Big Three, to a new song written with his grandson Alex called "Study War No More" — 60s sentiments in a 20s

blues setting.

On the rare occasions that this supremely laidback album breaks into a roar, Dixon's 76-year-old voice sometimes verges on a croak, but on the slow songs he summons up the astonishingly deep tone that is his trademark. Chess veteran Cash McCall contributes nicely understated guitar, just once breaking into an incendiary solo on "I Do The Job". Harmonica player Sugar Blue (best known for the Stones' "Miss You") sounds a mite florid at first, but plays some brilliant duets with McCall.

Bur the best part of it is the melodic piano of Lafayette Leake, whose rippling solos illuminate the whole album. Leake, who played on Wolf's "Killing Floor", Waters's "You Shook Me" and Sonny Boy Williamson's "Help Me", died on August 14, 1990.

He could not have gone out on a better note than this gently addictive album.

PHIL MCNEILL

**EINSTUERZENDE
NEUBAUTEN/HEINER
MUELLER**
Die Hamletmaschine

Ego Rough Trade Deutschland RTO197 1208 2 CD

SHORTLY BEFORE the fall of West Berlin in October 1990 Heiner Müller, a DDR playwright with a foot either side of the Berlin Wall (each of them kicking both ways), established a working partnership with Blixa Bargeld and Einstürzende Neubauten. On the face of it there's little common ground between the west's dandy of the apocalypse and the east's successor-cum-critic of Brecht. But they do share uncompromising working methods. Both blast away at their subjects until their essences reveal themselves in the ruins left behind.

Die Hamletmaschine is the best known of Müller's pulverisings of the classics. What survives re-surfaces in Hamlet's gloomy reflections on his usurper step-father's self-serving abuse of the state apparatus. Charred Shakespeare fragments, co-mingled with shredded state reports and the people's fearful retorts, are spoken like epitaphs for a lost utopia. Bargeld directed himself as Hamlet in this DDR radio version. He speaks Hamlet in a rich, measured rhetoric alternately ringing with the anger and melancholy of a

man who wised up too late to state wiles. The desolating Neubauten music carries the text on the sound of wind churning through the ruins of Elsinore, overlaid with the barbaric atmospheres of a collapsed state industrial power grinding to a halt.

Another Neubauten/Müller collaboration is the bleakly evocative "Picture Description" documented in *Stratagies Against Ambiguity II* – a retrospective of their Some Bizzare period. Outside Neubauten, FM Einheit has worked four of his German theatre scores into the suite "The End Of A Discussion" for his debut solo disc *Sturm* (Some Bizzare SBZ CD006). It also includes a blood-spilling improvisation with vocalist Diamanda Galas and guitarist Caspar Brötzmann.

What do all these ruined musics, seeking out ever more unlikely locations, reveal?



Unlike in Britain, the dust hasn't set on the Getman imagination yet. BIBA KOPP

BILL EVANS
The Brilliant
Timeless SPJ 329 CD

AT THE TIME the critically acclaimed *Paris Concert* (Elektra Musician) appeared, most commentators regretted the fact that Evans's last great trio had not recorded more prior to his death on 15 September 1980. *The Brilliant* represents the tip of the iceberg that goes a long way to remedying that situation. However, in so doing it creates a certain amount of discographical confusion.

Evans was recorded throughout his week-long engagement (31 August – 7 September)

at Keystone Corner, San Francisco and a good chunk of his performances were collected together on a ten-CD set on the Japanese Alpha label. These were then edited down into a double CD set *Conversations I* and a single CD *Conversations II*. However, Timeless have issued their own *Conversations* set; their I and II coinciding with Alpha's I and *The Brilliant* duplicating Alpha's II. So there we are, *cautus enigma* and all that.

The music is magnificent. It supports those critics who said that, at the time of his death, Evans's pianism was reaching for a new plateau of excellence. His touch had become more persuasive, he had begun to incorporate more angular, jagged runs into his essentially rhapsodic style, his playing had become more vital and energetic and he was incorporating new material, including his own originals, into his repertoire.

Among the album's highspots are a surging "Theme From MASH" and an unusual Evans original called "Knot For Mary F". Well-recorded, this superb music gives no indication of Evans's failing health, or that within a week he would be dead.

STUART NICHOLSON

RICKY FORD
Ebony Rhapsody
Cordis CDD79031 CD

"ELECTRIC" is a dangerous word – tends to summon up notions of ripping off other people's ideas and styles. But it's not automatically a term of disdainment, and in any case it would always look inadequate as a description of what goes on here.

There's no doubt Ford is a man of many parts – the extended opening cadences of "Mon Amour" recall late-period Rollins, whilst the reprise of Ellington's "In A Sentimental Mood" manages to owe something to both Ben Webster and Archie Shepp simultaneously. On the several 12-bars scattered here he can recall the gruff, late work of Hawkins as well as rather less revered practitioners such as Jack McVea or Don Wilkerston, and this by no means exhausts the list.

Yet if he's something of a chameleon, he also shatters with this animal a substantial core from within which these changes can be projected. In other words, there's a sense of being a true musician rather than simply a

technician.

He's backed here by the boisterous Jaki Byard, who's not averse to this sort of borrowing and delving himself, and whose solo on the Liszt-inspired title track hits heights of lunacy. Add in Milt Hinton, whose work on the roaring "Broadway" re-introduces classic slap-techniques, plus the effective drumming of Ben Riley, and you can see there's strength in depth.

JACK COOKE

**ROBERT FRIPP & THE
LEAGUE OF CRAFTY
GUITARISTS**
Show Of Hands
BG 2102 CD/MOLP

I'M GLAD this lot are back. Fripp's acoustic guitar big band remains one of the more interesting one-of-a-kind projects which, even in times like these, defiantly continue to operate within the context of commercial rock music while being obstinately neither.

Show Of Hands differs from their first effort in that there are 19 short tracks – the longest being just 3.19 – and while there's no token injection of Frippertronics at any point, there's a viola on one track and a few *a cappella* vocal contributions from Patricia Leavitt, in the form of short, aphoristic songs recited in a kind of performance poetry style more than a little reminiscent of Cage's settings of e.e. cummings. These are placed in such a way as to effectively split the instrumental pieces into four sections.

Naturally, a group such as this is pretty much a stylistic statement in itself. Within this, however, *Show Of Hands* delivers a wide range of musical statements ranging from the vaguely disturbing to the unashamedly jolly. The production is as nose-sharp as this instrumentation demands, evocative of crushed metal and flakes of sun on water, to borrow a description from Samuel R. Delaney. Do buy

TOM CORRIN

**GESUALDO/HILLIARD
ENSEMBLE**
Tenebrae

ECM New Series 1522/3 863 867 2 CD

HE WAS born three years before Shakespeare

and died, not a moment too soon, three years before him. In between, a tissue of adultery and revenge, hypothetical incest and bloody politicking, that seems closer to Ford or Webster or Tournear, or one of the other B-movie Jacobean, than to Shakespeare himself. Whatever canonical quibbles remain about the playwright melt into insignificance beside the baroque obscurity of his Italian contemporary; Don Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa, swept a bloodied cloak around himself and marched grandly out of musical history. It was the 1950s before anyone – or rather the Istituto Italiano per la Storia della Musica – began to put together reliable editions of the midtrials books, the canzonette, and sacred music. Stravinsky's *Masurionaw*, a realisation – or "surrealisation", as one historian has it – of three of the

behind packaging liturgical music in this highly cosmetized and decontextualized way. Gesualdo stands at the beginning of the "new" – it was then – homophony, much as Shakespeare stands at the beginning of modern English. Wonderful music, but we need a bit more of a hand than this affords, lest it just becomes an exotic lifestyle accessory, à Benedictus for a chastened New Age.

BRIAN MORTON

**ANDY HAMILTON
& THE BLUE NOTES**

Silveshine

World Circuit 025 CD/MOLP

WHEN THEY told me the record was finally out, naturally I was anxious to hear the result. And I'm very pleased to report to fans that Andy is in excellent form on this, his first recording.

There's a real street-party atmosphere with lots of guests. The title-track plus "Uncle Joe", original Hamilton compositions, are both calypso. Naturally that infectious exuberant dance had to be represented when the composer hails, like that other well-known sax-player Sonny Rollins, from the West Indies (though from a little before Sonny's time). Young David Murray, who is an up-coming star on tenor-six, guests on "Silveshine", and it's the turn of that fine melodic player Jean Toussaint on "Uncle Joe".

"I Guess I'll Have To Change My Plan" features the attractive muted trumpet of young Graham Hamilton, who leads on another beautiful ballad, "Old Folks". David Murray plays really sensitive bass-clarinet here, though I confess that maybe the number goes on a bit too long. On "I Can't Get Started" (with Orphy Robinson) and "Body And Soul" the leader's breathy, big-toned Ben Webster-ish tenor is to the fore. "You Are Too Beautiful" is the vocal number with Mick Hucknall, who turns out after all to be a bit of an old crooner, in the Kenny Haggard mould. Sensitive obbligato by the leader, though. "Autumn Groove" is, in my opinion, the high-point. A funky, modern Hamilton original featuring Jason Rebello. "Andy's Blues" has everybody, Andy Sheppard and Steve Williamson included.

"What's it like to make a record?", I'm



madrigals, was premiered in Venice in 1960s and revived a degree of interest.

Not that you'll find any of this in the ECM booklet, which goes instead for an imaginative gloss on Gesualdo's life and imagination, verse and prose by Celan and Hildeheimer. The tacit assumption is that this is well-trodden ground. Which it is, magnificently so, by the Monserrat Monastery Schola and the hugely influential Alfred Deller, who almost singlehandedly revived countertenor singing in Northern Europe. So how do the Hilliard Ensemble and ECM fare vis-à-vis the music itself? Equally magnificently. There's a wonderfully limpid quality to the voices and a deeply resonant ambience that belies the supposed brittleness of digital CD recording.

The main quibble relates to the rationale



sometimes asked. It's then that I have to own up and say that it's the *Birmingham Andy* who's the sax-playing recording star. On his long-overdue studio debut, he and his friends have got together to make a lovely, relaxed recording with some beautiful new numbers, ideal for small hours listening.

(THE OTHER) ANDY HAMILTON

ANDREW HILL

But Not Farewell

Blue Note CD/MC

BUT NOT FAREWELL carries over only one of the sidemen who contributed to the earlier *Earth Spirit* session, saxophonist Greg Osby, but if anything it is an even stronger outing from the pianist. For one thing, trombonist Robin Eubanks is able to provide a greater tonal and textural variety than Bobby Hutcherson's vibes, and is an ideally robust foil for Osby's more delicate soprano and alto work.

The opening phrase of "Westbury" sounds as if producer Michael Cuscuna hadn't quite punched the rape button fast enough, a curiously ragged touch to an otherwise highly polished set, which amply illustrates something of the breadth, if not the full depth, of Hill's musical interests.

The title track's mischievous tango theme is a fine example of his slightly Monk-ish humour, as well as his creative ability to worry tenaciously at a theme, always finding something more to say, even when exhaustion seems inevitable. Check the way he builds from the initial triples here, teasing out the theme in increasingly dissonant fashion.

"Nicomedes" draws on the more boopish side of his style, a bright and airy theme which coaxes some sharp ensemble playing from the quintet (Lonnie Plaxico and Cecil Brooks III provide the rhythm action). Even when comping behind a soloist, Hill is a compellingly inventive player, often to the point of attracting more attention than the ostensible front-player, as he does here in his oblique filling-in of space behind Greg Osby's horn.

The freer side of his style is more evident on the extended "Georgia Ham", which builds up a considerable momentum. The remaining cuts are a deceptively sharp-edged ballad duet with Osby, "Friends", in which

the players achieve a genuine dialogue, and two solo piano pieces. "Sunyside" is a short New Orleans funeral march pastiche, while the lengthy "Gone" is a more pastoral theme which he develops at length, working out the seemingly endless variations in melody and tempo which are absolutely characteristic of his work.

KENNY MATHIESON

LINTON KWESI JOHNSON

Tings An' Time

Steve & Dauphine STERNS 2002 CD/MC/EP

It is a paradox of Linton Kwesi Johnson that whereas he frequently cites the pervasive influence of reggae on his self-styled dub poetry, his work has hitherto not had a reciprocal effect on the music itself. Neither



is his audience really that which listens to reggae music: an LKJ rap is not something you would be likely to hear at a sound system dance.

In some respects this is surprising. After all, his long-time producer Dennis Bovell is a talented multi-instrumentalist who has worked successfully in all aspects of UK reggae – from dub to the crassest lovers rock – and achieved great local acclaim with his band Matumbi during the late 70s, while musicians like guitarist John Kpiente and keyboardist Pager King are mainstays of studio recordings in the field. And the sound they achieve here is certainly in accord with the best of indigenous reggae.

The problem is Linton Kwesi Johnson himself. In spite of his earnest intelligence, his verse and its delivery has a didacticism to it

that is anathema to a crowd who like naturalness in singing or the spontaneous cool of the mic DJ. Johnson is rarely this. His persona who sings of "dat" and "dat", which Linton certainly does not in his normal speaking voice, adopts the voice of rural Jamaica to present his argument, and his verse is really a kind of *lalibis*, almost gossipy in tone. The sound of Alton Ellis, for instance, singing "Black Man's Pride" or "African Descendants" in his normal vocal style elicits the kind of response the poet is unable to match with his equally radical message, for this reason.

Tings An' Time is much in the same vein as his debut *Dread Beat And Blood* in terms of rhymes and styles, though it lacks the same immediacy and novelty. Musically, it is his most suave album yet, with Johnny T on violin let loose to thrilling effect on the opening track "Story" and saxophonist Steve Gregory inventive throughout. A not unrewarding listen.

PENNY REEL

SHEILA JORDAN

Lost And Found

Music 5490 CD/MC/EP

This is a quintessential Sheila Jordan programme, the perfect crash-course for newcomers to her work. There are the regular tributes to her idols, Billie Holiday ("Good Morning Heartache") and Charlie Parker ("Anthropology"), some of her distinctive scatting ("Alone Together"), and those dips into the breathy lower register, like a Webster tenor sax. There are, too, demonstrations of her prescience of working towards a melodic line from some outburst, rather than beginning by stating it as written and then working away from it. You can hear this in the first moments of the album, on "The Very Thought Of You", where she hovers over the tune, surveying its overall contours before swooping down to define its details. Later on she uses Bird's intro to "Star Eyes" before launching into a surprising Latin-tinted version of "I Concentrate On You", and on "Alone Together", another piece taken at an unusually up pace, she stretches out in a superbly well-structured scat solo with a few pinches of Mediterranean flavour.

Lost And Found includes numbers which have been the highlights of Sheila's gigs for

some while bar have not previously been recorded, such as "Heartache" and a sensitive arrangement of the 18th century Scottish ballad "The Water Is Wide", which shares some of the lyrics and musical phrases of the even more beautiful "Carrickfergus". She also tackles the rarely heard Anderson-Weill song "Lost In The Stars".

Perhaps the best news here is that this is the first disc in a multi-record deal with Muse. It has taken 30 years for Ms Jordan to get a recording contract. Quincy Jones negotiated one with Mercury in the 60s, but she did not take it up as she was not allowed control over the choice of musicians or – most important of all to Sheila – material. On this album she has three favourite colleagues with her. Kenny Barron's graceful piano is especially fine on "Heartache", "The Water Is Wide" and the closing "My Shining Hour/We'll Be Together Again". On drums Ben Riley is responsive and light of touch, setting up a pleasant tension on that closing medley. The bassist is Harvie Swartz, who has partnered Sheila in some of her finest work, both live and on record: check out the stunning duo album *Old Time Feeling* from 1982.

BARRY WITHERDEN

SALIF KEITA

Amor

MANGO CDEM 1073 CD/LP/MC

SALIF KEITA's first (Western) release, *Soro*, had an intense dramatic force, playing his irreducible tensile singing against blocks of rhythm-text and children's voices. Its drive was a wee bit plucky, but that seemed like a challenge more than a cheat, given the context. His second, *Ko-Yan*, muffled this some. Grownup compositely concerns and production values smothered the struggles Keita wanted to embody: with and against his roots culture, with and against the colonial and the post-colonial settlements. Complexity buried the rage, when the first (less principled) exploiters of World-Music-as-pop-exotica could probably have given such conflicts more immediacy.

Sad to say, though *Amor* delivers some of the rich subtlety *Ko-Yan* was after, the earlier (non-Western) records – featuring Les Ambassadeurs, mostly – really were better at

it. They had a delicate weirdness only the voice really cracks into now. The sound all around him then was inextricably tied up with far-away and long-ago production conditions, no doubt (and no brutally able cosmopolitan French jazzrock session-men in sight); and he soared up and out of it, from deep past to immediate present. Now he gets the EWF horns, who once knew a thing or two about world-class plastic glory, and he sounds as he's arrived where he always wanted to be: TV-soundtrack land. Be-calm.

Producer Joe Zawinul's approach – slabs of sound-colour in call-and-response, instruments piercing-keening (including guest appearances from Wayne Shorter) through the soft-tone multi-layered busy keyboard/guitar-synth fusion-fogs – probably actually



accords very well with Keita's own dream of his music everywhere. But it's still the wrong one (rhythm especially is just so much flavours to Zawinul, nor the lived flesh of an argument). It's as if Keita had asked him, could he just sound ordinary, like that western chart-pop? So that the kids all love me. Of course they won't.

MARK SINKER

KRONOS QUARTET

Witold Lutoslawski: String Quartet
Eckers Nonesuch 7559 79252 2 CD

Kevin Volan: Hunting Gathering
Eckers Nonesuch 7559 79253 2 CD

Astor Piazzolla: Five Tango Sensations
Eckers Nonesuch 7559 79254 2

TIPIALLY GOOD marketing from the Casually Dressed Ones. CD singles for bows of medium and higher elevation, one *musica-classica* work per disc, and a price to match. As an initial sample of their range, this is about right; one unquestionable modern classic, one spanking new score with maximum cross-over potential, and one cheekily offbeat collaboration.

The Lutoslawski, finished in 1964, is one of the boldest of modern scores, its indeterminacy a quietly subversive response to the imaginative cramps and chills attendant on going out before the frost melts and without the folk dress of the earlier pieces. Open-formed it may be, but it is also deeply marked with Lutoslawski's considerable personal force. In his notes, Mark Swed lines up the metaphors, death and transfiguration, personal crisis and resolution, sexual climax and stasis. It's not clear whether these are tick-off choices or simultaneously present.

The last is a little easier to hear in Piazzolla's sexy slow drag through the most revived of popular forms. This, their third slice of Piazzolla, is the *Kronos* at their most laid back and it's hard to equate these pieces with the fierce rhythms and sharp articulations of Volan's "African paraphrases". More accessible and appealing than *White Man Sleeps* (on the eponymous 7559 79163), *Hunting Gathering* grew out of the earlier rehearsals, mixes Malian, Zimbabwean and Ethiopian (shouldn't that strictly be Sodanese?) materials into a finely unified, and not too stuffy anthropological *tour de force*.

BRIAN MORTON

JOE LOVANO

Landmarks

Blu Note CDP 796 1082 CD/MC

WITH THE SUCCESS of John Scofield's wonderful *Time On My Hands* album, a lot more people started to notice Joe Lovano, but he had been steadily adding his own mixture of out-playing and regular lyricism to the work of Paul Motian, Michel Petrucciani, Charlie Haden and plenty of others for much of the 1980s. Coltrane naturally has a hold on Lovano (the torrential double-time, the thumping bell-norts) but so do Ornette Coleman and Monk, in his emphatic time, long-range construction and circuitous



phrasing. The years with Paul Motian must have helped too, an apprenticeship with one of the most swinging unswinging drummers in jazz.

This set features both piano and guitar (plus drums and bass) on some Monkish quick pieces, crackly New York cop-show funk ("Here And Now"), wild free excursions and surprisingly fragile ballads. The quality of the compositions isn't 100 per cent, and CD capaciousness may be led the band to record two more tunes than they needed. But Lovano reveals that unlike a lot of gung-ho post-Traneists, he can be an astonishingly tender performer on slow tunes, drifting into a seductively tremulous mid-register sound.

On a far four-four Lovano skates briefly over the music without threatening to break the windows, and even when he increases the pressure his Coltraneish weavings and tumblings still sound amiable. The whole effect, though it's a bit of a stretch of the imagination, is like Zoot Sims might have been if he'd grown up with Trane and Ornette instead of Lester Young. JOHN FORDHAM

WARNE MARSH

Ne Plus Ultra

Harc ART 6063 CD

Ne Plus Ultra is one of tenorist Warne Marsh's best recordings, made at the point when his celebrated melodic inventiveness was beginning to mesh with more active rhythm sections than had happened under the iron rule of Lennie Tristano. Though *Ne Plus Ultra*'s conception involves a two-horn dialogue in the manner of Marsh's collaborations with Lee Konitz in the late 40s (Gary Foster ostensibly represents the Konitz voice here but both his construction and tone betray a shade or two of Ornette), John Tirabasso on drums and Dave Paolato on bass add a precise, low-key tension.

Much of the music is from the Tristano repertoire — including a scurrying, sliding "Lennie's Pennies", in which Marsh exchanges his squawky-toned rumblings and bar-jumping legato runs with Foster's more amiable sounding horn, the two circling around each other for several choruses, moving into a tussle, and winding up in deliciously freewheeling high counterpoint. "317E 32nd" and "Subconscious-Lee" are

similarly delivered with a buzzy, unflamboyant relish, and the restraint (not to say downright censorship) that Marsh exercises over familiar diversions such as volume changes, references to bolt-on licks or the jazz musician's traditional fallback position of blues, highlights his extraordinary linear inventiveness and freedom in riding over the regular architecture of a tune.

It's music played without preamble and without selfconsciousness, a steady unfolding of melodic improvisation performed without concern for packaging. The style thus has a pristine quality that may have helped people to label it unemotional. But there's plenty of emotion in Marsh, just very little emotionalism. That's what makes him such a refreshing alternative in postwar jazz.

JOHN FORDHAM



LOUIS MOHOLY'S VIVA-LA-BLACK Exile

Ogde OGCD 005 CD

YOU DON'T hear so much of this kind of bumpy, hairy free jazz anymore. Out of favour with the new smoothies and viewed as slightly barbaric by classical improvisers, it's an endangered genre — in Britain, anyway, where most worthwhile things are endangered.

Although this band doesn't hit you between the eyebrows in quite the way I feel this line-up should there is a lot of heart-warming music and a feel that's familiar. It's loose, ragged and raw. On "Dudu Pukwana" a tripping little chant breaks up into a trumpet solo that slaps the listener sharply

across the face. Fragments of theme serve to divide the soloists. Steve Williamson darts cleanly across the shifting rhythm field rather than let himself be carried, and he sounds rather *freeb* in this sanguine company.

Louis Moholo and Paul Rogers maintain a wily relationship with the beat and each other. Constantly pulling the rug out from under soloists and hitting a downward spiral before levelling out once more. Saxophonist Sean Bergin seems to enjoy the ride and his solos form some of the more memorable moments. A thick, stately tone with a traditional fast vibrato, he explores with unhurried, winding lines. I'm reminded of Dewey Redman.

Clocking in at 17:35, "Wathinta Amoda" forms the centerpiece of the album. Horns rise from a swamp of drones like an ancient shipwreck being pulled from the sea bed. They break into a furious argument, Bergin finally winning out to make a strong statement. *Exile* has its gripping moments, like the eerie and ugly swamp of "Vision" or the tight, bright opening of "For The Blue Notes", but too often the tension is dissipated and the music fails to take off.

ROLAND RAMANAN

DAVID MURRAY

Special Quartet

DIW B13E CD

DAVID MURRAY

Live At The Lower Manhattan Ocean Club

Vols 1 & 2

Indis Navigation IN 1032 CD

A wide span of Murray music on these two quartet records. The *Special Quartet*, produced by Bob Thiele, makes a nice companion volume for the Grammy-winning *Blues For Coltrane*. McCoy Tyner's on piano, Elvin Jones recruited on drums, Fred Hopkins is the bassist. The *Lower Manhattan Ocean Club* recordings — previously released on two LPs — are a blast from the tail end of the Loft scene, being a very loose 1977 session with Lester Bowie, Hopkins again, and Phillip Wilson.

Special Quartet would be worth the price of admission for "Cousin Mary" alone, an amazing romp through the *Giant Steps* favourite that challenges even the Coltrane Quartet's 1962 concert version, with McCoy and Elvin

at their most hair-raisingly galvanic, and Murray's solo zipping along a jagged trajectory that works all the tenor sax's range. Jones, after storming the staccato intro of "Hope/Scope" (which resembles the neo-minimalist themes Brian Sandstrum writes for Hal Russell), seems less secure with its development into dissolved rime but Tyner takes a wonderful free solo, a marvel of spontaneous invention, and there's a deeply felt bass feature for the excellent and still under-acknowledged Hopkins. Ten minutes of "In A Sentimental Mood" is the currently-obligatory dewy-eyed tribute to The Tradition, beautifully played, though.

Fourteen years ago, nobody expected this music to become so cap-in-hand deferential to its history (although, come to think of it, "Bechet's Bounce", already in the Murray repertoire, should have been read as a warning). The tradition's value was not in dispute but the attitude was: that's been done and done well, let's find the new music. Inevitably that meant more searching than concrete results and moments when the players were clearly at sea without a compass. There are enough of these amongst the 75 minutes of the *Osprey Club* CD, but when the inspiration hits, as on the flying post-Ornette "Obe", you know it was worth waiting for. Some of Lester Bowie's best-ever playing here, Wilson and Hopkins are smoking, and the not-quite-formed Murray wins through on sheer enthusiasm with an eruptively joyous solo.

STEVE LAKE

GREG OSBY

Man-Talk For Moderns Vol-X

Blue Note CDP 7954142

ONCE ALFRED LION had retired, Francis Wolff had died and Duke Pearson had ceased to be the mainspring of Blue Note's musical policy, that famous slogan ("the best in jazz since 1939") began to sound pretty hollow. Having been regurgitated from the maw of the Liberty Leviathan Blue Note was eventually gobblled up by the even more massive Thorn EMI conglomerate, and one feared the worst.

So far, however, not at all bad, and Greg Osby's new album is another indicator that those responsible for the label's current signing policy have a good ear for a reasonable

balance between quality and commercial potential. The playing is highly polished, and there are a lot of strong, funky rhythms and sinuous but catchy tunes. Of course, you could say that about a couple of thousand releases each year, and most of them add up to no more than the sum of these things. Osby's offering delivers something extra.

Those tricky tunes are inventive, rather than merely cleverly-crafted, the rhythms additively insistent rather than merely repetitive. "Cad-lack Back", "Balaska" and "Man-Talk", with their vague haemolitic tinge and layers of danceable riffs, are good, representative samples of what goes on, but the highlight of the album is the closing track "2th (T'wooth)", an ominous heavy-funk piece where the tempo lurches and slides unnervingly behind reed and keyboard

music. The latter has rather taken a back seat this past decade and longer, even as his exploits have reached the pages of the tabloid press.

Lee Perry hasn't laid a decent reggae rhythm since he burned down his Black Ark studio in Jamaica in the late 70s. Between whiles, he's produced a series of sketchy albums where he does little more than rant to some limp accompaniment. There are some who enjoy this kind of thing, there are others who irresponsibly encourage Scratch in his wily ways. Whichever, he rarely involves himself in music which I listen to with any pleasure.

This selection has only tenuous links with Perry. The majority of the tracks are computerised rhythms laid at a studio in New York, with Scratch obviously in there somewhere in the mix and even obliging with a garbled vocal accompaniment on occasion, including a rendition of Bob Marley's "Night Shift", which he originally crafted with the singer, realised here as "Upful Dub Fashion".

A digital improvisation on The Conquerors' rock steady standard "Won't You Come Home" as "Come Home Dub" merits a mention in passing, but the one significant track is "Ooh La La Dub", a cut of a rhythm laid at Black Ark which serviced The Hep-tones' "Revolution" and a beautiful horns cut with the same title from Baba Leslie.

PENNY REEL



wails until an abrupt and unexpected end.

I'm less enamoured of the ballads than the rest of the material, though the eerily beautiful "Like So" is a major exception to this, not least because of Ed Simon's work. Simon contributes plenty of opposite keyboard locks and fills (sample the darkly effective "Black Moon") and some thoughtful piano solos, whilst drummer Billy Kilson and star bassist Lonnie Plaxico take care of the proverbial business.

BARRY WITHERDEN

LEE SCRATCH PERRY

In Satan's Dub

Discorecords DAN 066 CD/MC/LP

It is unfortunate that Lee Perry's cult reputation rests as much on his notoriety as his

DANIEL PONCE

Change Te Llano

Mango CIDM 1071 CD/MC/LP

SINCE ARRIVING in New York from Havana via the 1980 Mariel Boatlift virtuoso *cigarrero* Daniel Ponce has appeared on recordings by Sly & Robbie, Laurie Anderson, McCoy Tyner, Mick Jagger, Nona Hendryx, Yoko Ono and just about anyone else you'd care to mention. *Change Te Llano* is the third album to be released under his own name and, like its predecessors, it attempts to extend the commercial and expressive outreach of the percussionist's music by drawing on these extensive musical experiences.

Ponce is a contemporary of such performers as Hilton Ruiz and Jerry Gonzalez and, like them, his approach to the prevailing strictures in Latin music might be described

as progressive with conservative undertones. Listen to a pivotal track like "Oferec" to get the idea. The central arrangement is lush and accessible, dominated by synthesizers, brass and fiery, jazz-derived solos, but it's built on a classic Cuban *montuno* and framed by percussion parts inspired by the ceremonial drumming of the West African Yoruba religion. Similarly intentioned but less dramatic juxtapositions form the basis for both "Latin Perspective" and "Bilongong", with their combination of *cañas* solos over funk-like bass lines and the use of such resolutely non-Latin instruments as drum kits and electric guitars. The title track and "Recojo Y Vete", by contrast, offer relatively conventional views on current Neyronian salsa.

The group Ponce has assembled to realize this compelling music contains some of the best musicians currently working in New York: vocalists Tito Allen and Milton Cordova; saxophonist Mario Rivera; percussionist Steve Berryman; trumpeter David Rodriguez; and, particularly, Oscar Hernandez, whose broad-based production, incisive arrangements and quacksilver piano solos are responsible for much of the album's success.

TONY HERRINGTON

SERGEY PROKOFIEV

The Five Piano Concertos

Chadoss CHAN 1014 CD

IN LITTLE matters like life and death, Prokofiev was not a lucky man. His death in Russia in 1953 was eclipsed by that of Stalin on the same day, and this year's centenary of his birth has been similarly overshadowed by the Mozart bicentennial. You could say that, for a major composer, he seems extraordinarily prone to bad timing!

One area in which Prokofiev's star shines undimmed is as a composer of lively, dramatic and highly virtuosic piano concertos. To mark his centenary, Chadoss have issued four, mid-price box-sets of Prokofiev works, including the complete symphonies (to be reviewed next month), the *Cinderella* and *Romeo And Juliet* ballet suites and this two-CD set of the complete piano concertos, with soloists Boris Berman (Nos 1, 4, 5) and Horacio Gutiérrez accompanied by Nérne Jarvi and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.

Prokofiev wrote his first piano concerto in 1912 and made it famous two years later when he chose to play it at the Rubenstein Prize piano competition, arguing shrewdly that the examiners, not being acquainted with the work, "would not be able to judge whether I was playing it well or not". The ploy worked – he won the prize! At 16 minutes, it's the most concise of his concertos, a bold, vividly exciting work, full of what would prove to be such characteristic flourishes as rapid legato piano runs, crashing orchestral chords and a dashing rhythmic trio. The second concerto, with its brilliant first-movement cadenza followed by a second movement of continuous piano semiquavers, and the action-packed fifth are also examples of virtuoso – even flashy – piano writing, while the third, probably the



most popular, slips a few lyrical interludes amidst all the jostling vibrancy. The fourth concerto, for the left hand only, was written for the Austrian pianist Paul Wittgenstein, who lost his right arm in the First World War. However, he didn't like it, and told Prokofiev, "I don't understand a single note of it and I shall not play it". So there.

The performances are good, as much for Jarvi's exuberant support as for the soloists: in fact, Berman can't match Richter's electrifying account of the first concerto and Gutiérrez tends to lose sight of the metatexture in his delight with bravura detail, though Prokofiev packed so many ideas and themes into these works they do tend towards the episodic: a structural weakness only partly excused by the power and sparkle of the fragments.

GRAHAM LOCK

SUNDAY ALL OVER THE WORLD

Kneeling At The Shrine

BEG 2101 CD/MC/LP

ROBERT FRIPP, Toyah, crafty guitarist and Chapman Stickist Trey Gunn (I bet his name's really Trevor Gusset) and drummer Paul Beavis stab, jab, clatter and rasp their way through some music which bears all the hallmarks of having been defined and refined through some highly specific process. OK, I'm guessing.

If you like: this band sounds a bit like the last incarnation of King Crimson insofar as it features Fripp and a Stick. It sounds a bit *Lady Of The Tigris* insofar as Toyah's on it as well. But mostly it's a kind of supercerebral thrash, likely heavy on arpeggios and bpm. The pace is fast, the instrumental lines relentless, the lyrics suitably cryptic, the voice breathy and conspiratorial. The latter all the time, unfortunately. Maybe the homogeneity is deliberate, but rhythmic range doesn't seem to be one of Toyah's strong points. I'd like to let Maggie Nicols – or Kate Bush, for that matter – loose on some material like this.

The production is pleasantly sparse, no doubt partly due to the absence of a bass as such. Also absent: keyboard pads, backing vocals, unnecessary ornamentation, vulgar Cyberpunk Pentangle for devotees of the Fripp situation, which remains highly productive.

TON CORBIN

THIRD PERSON

The Bends

Knitting Factory Works KFW102 CD

THIRD PERSON consists of a permanent duo – Tom Cora (cello) and Samm Bennett (percussion) – who invite a different guest each time they play the Knitting Factory. This release skips between short segments from different gigs.

Tom Cora seems to be the guiding light as the music is very similar to that of Curlew (which he also fronts): a kind of stopgo, clunking funk. Despite the mix-and-match variety of guests – Curlew's saxophonist George Cartwright, guitarists Marc Ribot and Chris Cochrane, Nic Collins's electronics – the music is frustratingly smoky. Guests

rant and rave but they cannot upset the partners' chaiming backbear.

Improvisation may be the problem. No Safety, which feature the same rhythm section as Curlew, make an attractive leftfield pop band – but they write *song*. Zena Parkins's harp adds some much-needed finger-on-string directness to "Procedure Against Bain" and her harmonic imagination is a treat after Coe's tame vamp; Don Byron's chilling clarinet is a welcome visitor from planet jazz (where notes *really* whiz); Myra Melford's Cecil Taylorish piano deserves a cheer.

Third Person is the dog-end of the industrial improvisation pioneered by Massacre and Material a decade ago, cellos and samples the postmodern update on endless 70s guitar jams. The sleeve notes mark the absence of jazz with approval. But what has rock given us here? The beat is safe, the textures are "fun" and the notes are incredibly boring. It's enough to give improvisation a bad name. (*What, again?* – Ed)

BEN WATSON

**JEAN TOUSSAINT &
JASON REBELLO**
Impressions Of Coltrane

September 5101 CD

THIS is an album that invites unfortunate comparisons, and not just with Mr JC himself. Recorded in Holland in July 1987 six days after the twentieth anniversary of Coltrane's death, it was also produced in the same month as the exemplary Impulse tribute *Blow For Coltrane* featuring McCoy Tyner, Roy Haynes, Cecil McBee, David Murray and Pharoah Sanders. Previously released in Japan, and only just available here, on both counts, it matches up very poorly.

The main difference is one of spirit. While both records are no doubt loving tributes, the Impulse recording took Coltrane's relentless search as a springboard for further explorations and for new compositions in the classic quartet vein. This recording stays very much back at the Coltrane starting blocks. The mid-tempo tracks feel laboured, the drumming is for the most part uninspired, Toussaint – although he can be refreshingly gritty – occasionally lacks conviction, and it is impossible to listen to such well-known tracks as "Miles Mode" (iv) and "Cousin

Mazy" in this format without the original solos flooding into your mind. Ray Drummond and Kenny Washington, on this mix, are also impossibly loud.

The one track common to both albums, "Naima", exposes the main problems. On the Impulse tribute, Tyner positively attacks the ballad, his grand, rolling chords behind the composition's glorious melodic lines giving the tune a truly dramatic edge. With Roy Haynes further exploring the tune's possibilities, there is a lot going on. In comparison (however unfair it may seem), the Impressions band seems flat, polite and one-dimensional. Impressions these may only be (and impressive) first ones of the 18-year-old Rebello ar that, but step into the classic quartet arena and they need to be a great deal stronger than this

PHILIP WATSON



**29TH STREET
SAXOPHONE QUARTET**
Underground

Artiles 422-848-415 CD/LP/MC

I'll deal with the "impurities" first: those tracks that contain elements other than the four saxophones. Firstly, there is "Old Devil Moon" where the saxes form a backing group for a girl singer and a conventional rhythm section – a good up-tempo swinger. "It's Your Thing" is a soul number with a ridiculously cute rap by some smooth dude. Finally, "Free Ar Las", an uneventful rift for a mellow trumpet. All three of them unnecessary distractions from the main action, the glittering bebop counterpoint this group has made their own. The level of sheer virtuosity tends to batter the ear into submission after a

while and maybe the above tracks were intended as light relief. Not that I'm implying there is any heaviness – the fleet finger-work and quick good humour make for a very *appy* sound, in the best sense of the word.

The constant interweaving and the need to maintain a powerful forward momentum are the trademarks of 29th Street but they can also be limiting factors. We rarely have a chance to soak up the sonorities of the instruments and the snappy material lacks genuine weight. Still, like trapeze artists performing somersaults without a safety net, they continue to amaze. ROLAND RAMANAN

VARIOUS

Brazil Classics 3: Forró

Sire 7599 76523 CD/LP

THE PREVIOUS album in David Byrne's ongoing survey of Brazilian music was something of an esoteric landmark. Focusing on the strange career of singer/guitarist Tom Ze, the record featured a performer neglected for nearly 20 years even in his native Bahia. At least *Forró* contains music which retains a degree of social resonance, detailing the living, breathing, dance-orientated music of the country's North East coast.

The wide ranging use of accordion as a core instrument is the album's most constant factor, lending several of the tracks a superficial similarity to small group *cumbia* and *merengue*. Other characteristics include wayward, hi-stepping bass lines, shuffling percussion, strict songforms and melodies tinged with a peculiarly Brazilian melancholy.

Byrne's 18 examples coalesce around *forró*'s present development as an urbanized (in Rio) folk form. Consequently, the various performances obscure the music's origins in 19th century Europe and Africa to underline its current use of Western technology and instrumentation, the gradual integration with other Brazilian, Latin and non-Latin musics and its subsequent, spiralling Hispanic appeal.

Byrne has referred to his work on these compilations as a labour of love and they're not so hard to listen to either. Names to check further on this evidence include the late, 40s pioneer Luiz Gonzaga, veteran *sambista* Jackson do Pandeiro and cur-



rene crossover stars like Anastacia and Elba Ramalho.

TONY HERRINGTON

CASSANDRA WILSON

She Who Weeps

JMT 834 443-2 CD/LP/MC

A LABEL is nothing if not repeatable and *She Who Weeps* opens with an obviously M-Basic track, "Iconic Memories". A link to Cassandra Wilson's previous, defiantly modern album *Jump World* it leads, however, to the much broader strokes of this recording.

"Iconic Memories" is a rhythmic, logically abstract song ("You tell me what it means," she announced at the Jazz Cafe, though its icons, dreams and the last line "You are there" here suggest the music history she draws on.) It's an assertive track — with complementary piano from Rod Williams — opening an album for an assertive voice. Not an in-your-face assertiveness, but one that comes through being confident in direction, sure in source. She has a voice that's clearly bodily — as well as emotionally-created, and so perfectly suited to the central piece of the album — a ten-minute cover of "Body And Soul", with full-blooded vocals and a both quiet and sure-footed arrangement (that assertion is not lost) with sumptuous bass from Reggie Washington.

She also takes church and puts it with drum-programmed modern rhythmnings (written with Steve Coleman, programmed by herself) in "Our Loud"; covers Aretha's "Angel" and improvises wordlessly (alongside some melodic drumming from Mark Johnson) in "Chelsea Bridge". The title track is a simple, wonderful lullaby written by her mother at the age of ten which could pass, as I suppose the best lullabies do, as a traditional "folk" tune. And once again there's a wealth of talent drawn on, largely to form variations on her trio of piano, bass and drums. The brassless line-up particularly suits her, with all the players as assured as she is, adding to the tight, body-centred feel of the music, and leaving any horn-like ornamentation to her voice.

Short for a modern CD (at about 40 minutes) this is still an album where every minute counts. It's not edge-of-the-seat enough to be truly cutting edge but the knife is in her kitchen.

ANDREW POTHECARY

FAST LICKS



Graham Lock f-licks through a choice selection of new releases.

RAY ANDERSON *WISHBONE* (*Gramavision GV 79454-2 CD*). Latest from the mod-jazz trombonist whose rampant, high-jinks eclecticism possibly deters as many as it attracts. *Wishbone* features his regular quartet (with pianist Fumio Irahashi) and covers the usual spectrum of styles — from Mingus to soca to Ray's multiphonic vocals on "Come Love". Highlights are a heartfelt "Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love" and Ray's own somberly eloquent "Wishbone Suite"; my only reserva-

KATHLEEN BATTLE & JESSYE NORMAN *SPIRITUALS IN CONCERT* (*Deutsche Grammophon 429 790-2 CD*). It was Thelonious Monk, who'd spent time playing in gospel troupes, who used to counsel "sing it wrong", and I get a distinct feeling of things-out-of-sync when I hear spirituals performed with the conservatory-trained precision-accuracy of the operatic diva. Still, there's no denying the power of these songs, nor the beauty of these voices, recorded live at Carnegie Hall in March 1990. There are some great moments — Norman's intense, brooding "Sinner, Please Don't Let This Harvest Pass", Battle's incredibly poignant "Lord, How Come Me Here" and the pair's unexpectedly comic duet on "Scandalize My Name" — but by the end, somewhere between the high-brow formality and the high-gloss entertainment, the profundity of the spiritual has quietly left the auditorium.



tion is that the whole is a little short on risk.

KENNY BARRON QUARTET *INVITATION* (*Cruz Cruz 1044 CD*). Relaxed neo-bop from the veteran pianist helped by upcoming tenor tusk Ralph Moore, whose own 1987 *Cross Cross* release 623 *C Street* has just been reissued on CD. That's a good, probing, occasionally uncertain set, whereas *Invitation* is all flowing virtuosity. (Everything was done in a single take, according to Peter Leitch's notes.) The material takes in Monk, John Lewis, standards and three Barron originals. The leader's solo version of "You Don't Know What Love Is" displays formidable technique at the expense of the song's meaning, but mostly this is a nice set, with Moore its liveliest voice.

DAVID DEL TREDICI *STEPS, HADDOCKS' EYES* (*New World Records 80390-2 CD*). Del Tredici is the 60s serialist who converted to tonality via a series of works based on extracts from Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books. "Haddocks' Eyes" is the latest, an elaborate setting of the White Knight's song from *Through The Looking Glass*. Narrated by Claire Bloom and superbly sung by soprano Susan Narucki, it's a brilliant piece in which Del Tredici's music catches perfectly the comic-crazy, spinning out-of-control delirium of the text. "Steps" is a turbulent, 30-minute orchestral piece whose two main themes become increasingly agitated, frenzied and dissonant — "like Godzilla battling Megalon," the composer notes helpfully.

CHICO FREEMAN *SPRIT SENSITIVE* (*India Navigation IN 1045 CD*); **CHICO AND VON FREEMAN** *CHICO AND FREEMAN* (*India Navigation IN 1070 CD*). Many people regard Chico Freeman's wonderful 1979 ballad set *Spirit Sensitive* as the tenorman's finest hour and I'm among them: the CD reissue offers the further bonus of four extra tracks, including "Lonne's Lament" and "Wise One", making it an essential purchase. *Freeman & Freeman* reunites him with fellow-tenor (and dad) Von in a live 1981 blowing date that drags a bit on the two longer tracks



but is worth hearing for Von's guarded phrasing as he picks a personal path through standards such as "I Can't Get Seared" and "The Shadow Of Your Smile". Nice to see the India Navigation label back in circulation too – it's now distributed in the UK by Koch International.

GIORGIO GASLINI AYLER'S WINGS (*Seal Note* 121 270-2 CD/LP). I suppose, in theory, you can make anyone's music sound like anyone else's; still, it's a shock to hear Albert Ayler tunes played as if Bach and Mozart had written them! Gaslini has made piano transcriptions of eight Ayler tunes and, ignoring their original emotional contexts, reshaped them as compositions through the filter of his own love for, and knowledge of, the European classical tradition. It's a strange experience to hear stirring anthems such as "Ghosts" and "Mothers" not only devoid of Ayler's yearning horn cries but recast as dinky, intricate piano pieces – yet the resulting music has its own logic and fascination. Brilliantly conceived and executed, *Ayler's Wings* – like Gaslini's earlier Monk and Schumann projects – may leave you as perplexed as enlightened, but it demands to be heard.

JIMMY GIUFFRE 4 LIQUID DANCERS (*Seal Note* 121 158-2 CD/LP). More Weather Report-inspired electric chamber jazz from the quartet who brought you *Qwasar* and *Dragonfly*. As on those records, the compositions here are miniature gems, subtly-crafted soundscapes where colours, textures and lines float and swirl in a delicate kaleidoscope of interplay. Giuffre's winds, tenor, soprano, clarinet and bass flute through the tunes in sinuous ribbons of sound; Pete Levin makes his electric keyboards speak with eloquent restraint; Bob Nieske and Randy Kaye epitomise the discreet excellence of the ideal rhythm section. Small-group jazz at its most lyrical and reflective.

FRANZ JOSEF HAYDN SYMPHONIES 45 & 48 (*CBS Masterworks* MDK 46507 CD). The Haydn bicentennial is almost 20 years in the future, but suddenly the shops are awash with his symphonies! Decca have just reis-

sued the popular Dorati complete set on mid-price CD and no fewer than four new cycles on original instruments have been launched recently – by Roy Goodman (Hyperion), Christopher Hogwood (L'Oiseau Lyre), Sigiswald Kuijken (Virgin Classics) and Trevor Pinnock (Archiv). Largely overlooked in this bustle is one of my favourite (but incomplete) sets, that made by Derek Solomons and L'Estro Armonica, early 80s pioneers of playing these works on period instruments and with the original small-scale ensemble. Now CBS have reissued this coupling of two of Haydn's most popular symphonies, the "Farewell" and the "Maria Theresa", and I can recommend it unreservedly. There's a rare sense of delight in Solomons' performances which is much in evidence in these strikingly different works –



the darkly reflective No 45, with its famous joke ending, and the ceremonial No 48, all whirling speed and fanfare flourishes. Roll on 2009 and the Complete Haydn Edition!

ELIZABETH MACONCHY STRING QUARTETS Nos 9–13 (*Unison-Kanchana* DKP 9082 CD). The final part of Unicorn's complete Macconchy string quartet cycle, volumes one and two of which were very well received in these pages by Brian Morton and Andy Hamilton respectively. I can only reiterate Andy's astonishment that music of such high quality has gone virtually unremarked for so long. This third volume, covering the period 1968–1984, confirms the impression of its predecessors that Macconchy's is one of the great string quartet cycles of the century.

These are works of intense passion, rigorous intellect and formal brilliance, all integrated into a seamless flow of musical discourse – what Nicols LeFanu's notes call "the impassioned argument so characteristic of Macconchy" (though each quartet has its moments of serenity). Sensitive played too by the Misstr Quarter.

THE O'JAYS EMOTIONALLY YOURS (*EMI MTL1060 CD/MC/LP*). Classic 70s Philly group still going strong. Lead singer Eddie Levert sets the blood tingling on glorious ballads such as "If I Find Love Again" and the 'R&B version' of the Dylan-penned title-track. One or two songs almost lose the voices in a sea of techno-funk, and the obligatory rip feature is a no-no; but give the O'Jays a chance to sing, plus some half-decent material (as happens on about two-thirds of *Emotionally Yours*) and they deliver with passion and panache. "Let Me Love You Like A Man", implores Levert, and for once it sounds more like a promise than a threat.

GONZALO RUBALCABA DISCOVERY (*Blue Note* CDP 7 93478 2 CD/MC). Rubalcaba is a Cuban pianist, "discovered" by Charlie Haden, here making his recording debut with a trio (Haden and Paul Motian) recorded live at last year's Montreux Festival. There's no denying his phenomenal technique nor his abundant musicality, it's just that he's one of those pianists with the irritating (to me) habit of embroidering every line with frills and filling every space with runs of notes that come whirling off the keyboard as if from an electric sewing machine. For once in my life I find myself agreeing with Margaret Thatcher, who so wisely remarked that you don't solve a problem by throwing notes at it! That said, there's a lot here to admire: a "Well, You Needn't" that swings with youthful bravado, Haden's lovely "First Song" and a couple of rhapsodic Rubalcaba originals that suggest a major talent is waiting to mature behind those frantically flying fingers.

TAD SHULL QUINTET DEEP PASSION (*Cross* 1047 CD). Moderately engaging set of what my colleague Mike Fish would call



"pre-bop mainstream with post-swing overtones" – ie, tenorman Shull's models are players such as Don Byas, Lucky Thompson and Ben Webster, whose music straddles the bebop era. The rest of the group – Irvin Stokes (trumpet), Mike LeDonne (piano), Dennis Irwin (bass), Kenny Washington (drums) – are equally at home in the period setting, and at times it's very good indeed. Best tracks are LeDonne's "Big Ears", like one of those Ellington small-group lazy shuffles, with Shull at his most Webberish; and Lucky Thompson's title-track, Shull here finding a more personal, and riveting, approach.

HORACE TAPSCOTT *The Dark Tree 2* (but Art 6083 CD). Brian Morton gave a rave review to the first volume of this live concert set in *Wire 86* and I'm now giving a rave review to volume two. My reasons are much the same as Brian's: 1) Tapscott is one of the most important, and neglected, of American piano masters; 2) his colleagues here are the late John Carter, a supreme clarinet virtuoso, and the scintillating rhythm team of Cecil McBee and Andrew Cyrille; 3) the music is extremely good – mostly extended pieces, which let the players stretch out in exciting fashion, yet are shaped always by Tapscott's fine compositional sensibility. Check out both parts of *The Dark Tree*, then check out his solo records on Nimbus and the long-lost 60s masterpiece *The Giant Is Awakened* (newly reissued on the Novus *Wat Coast Hot* set – see *Wire* Winners above). If you don't have a couple of these in your collection, then you're simply not in the frame. No HT, no comment.

BERTRAM TURETZKY AND VINNY GOLIA *Intersections* (9 Wind NW 0129 CD). Set of 11 duets between classical bass maestro Turetzky and adventurous woodwind improviser Golia, who employs nearly a dozen varieties of clarinet and flute – plus piccolo – on this CD. The *Intersections* are, I guess, between composed and improvised music and it's impossible to tell who is playing which when. There's a lot to listen to – from the detailed responses of the duo's interplay to the range of timbral shadings they explore here. Golia plays as well as I've heard him,

and Turetzky is superb throughout, always looking to pursue the dialogues that make this music so engrossing. It may look dry on paper, but it sounds lovely on the ear.

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Boiling Point – Music From Hot Countries* (World Circuit WCD022 CD). "When you're hot, you're hot." A good summer party compilation, with bright, horn-led Latin dance tracks such as Joe Arroyo's "Yamulemao" and Rodolfo's "La Colegiala" cheek-to-cheek with the more sultry and insinuatingly sensuous music that seems to drift all across North Africa, from Mali to Sudan. The big names are here – Ali Farka Toure (twice), Oumou Sangare, Abdul Aziz El Mubarak and, my own favourites, Senegal's Orchestra Baobab, with their be-



witching guitar lines and clip-clop rhythms.

ANTONIO VIVALDI 8 CONCERTI (Archiv 3D Baroque 431 710-2 CD/MC); CONCERTI (Philips Vivaldi Edition 432 678-2 CD). The Philips disc is a mid-price sampler for their new 12-volume Vivaldi Edition and features four string concerti and one sonata performed by I Musici. Apart from *RV 552*, an intriguing concerto for "solo violin and a violin in distant echo", these are unexceptional works; the playing time of under 50 minutes plus the lack of notes make it a doubtful bargain. In contrast, the Archiv disc – by Trevor Pinnock and the English Concert – presents a diverting selection of eight concerti on various (original) instruments, including pieces for flute ("La Noste"), bassoon, two

mandolins, oboe and violin and a delightful work "con multi istromenti" for pairs of recorders, chalumeau, violins, mandolins and theorboes. Playing time is 70 minutes, notes are included and the performances are excellent. The disc is one of a new series of Archiv mid-price Baroque reissues which also includes Pinnock's versions of six Corelli concerti grossi (from Op 6) and Handel's *Music For The Royal Fireworks*. All great music

KEITH WASHINGTON *Make Time For Love* (Quest/Warner 7599 26528-2 CD). Debut solo recording for Detroit-born, ex-session singer and songwriter who, I'm told, "specializes in smooth, romantic soul". *Make Time For Love* underlines the point in aces. Washington is a fine singer, breathily emotive on these overwrought ballads, while Quest's production is state-of-the-art soft soul sophistication. The weak link is the songs themselves, all a little too similar to each other and never quite characterful enough to carry the freight of emotion Washington lays on them. But his singing will sweep you along regardless, its seductive, swooning conviction the highlight of the record and a promise of great things to come.

O V WRIGHT *That's How Strong My Love Is* (Hi Records HIKCD108 CD). One of the finest of deep soul singers, O V Wright recorded many outstanding sides for the Back Beat label in the 60s and 70s (collected on two Chatel compilations) before signing for Hi Records in 1976. This CD comprises the two LPs he made for that label before his untimely death, at the age of 42, in 1980. Produced by the great Willie Mitchell, Wright's gospel-inflected vocals, all husky intensity and falsetto flutters, meld superbly with the slinky funk of Hi's Memphis house-band. The songs are strong too – several Mitchell tracks plus Al Green/Percy Sledge/Bobby Womack hits which Wright inhabits so well you don't miss the originals. Best of all is an early deroo, "A Fool Can't See The Light"; O V's naked vocal, high over a simple, repeating gospel piano line, makes it a classic of searing soul intensity. Absolutely brilliant. This time, the cry is "sing it Wright".

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OUTLINES I

STAX

Mike Fish double-bumps through a nine-CD retrospective of great soul singles from the label that gave you Otis Redding, Sam & Dave, Rufus Thomas, Booker T . . .

STAX is a soul fan's label, a collector's resting place. It was a small operation in the early- and mid-60s, with only a handful of sides making any significant impression on the American pop charts, most of them by the company's one major star, Otis Redding. Although Stax soon became an important player in the R&B listings, it wasn't until the later part of the decade — with Sam and Dave, Eddie Floyd, Johnnie Taylor and Booker T and The MGs moving up to join Otis — that the label identified itself to a bigger audience, the way Motown and Atlantic already had done.

That was achieved with pop hits like "Soul Man" and "Knock On Wood". But nobody could accuse Stax of selling out: the consistency of sound and method which the label enjoyed was in the end simply tied up to stronger hooks and maybe better luck. Stax's music, the sound of Southern soul, set down in its Memphis studios, was and remains one of the most distinctive and inspiring things in black music. *The Complete Stax/Volt Singles: 1959-1968* (Atlantic 82218-2, nine CDs) is a particularly handsome boxed set that gives us what the title says. It's an overdue tribute to an operation that is still under-recognised by all but the hardcore of old soul followers.

That lack of familiarity ensures that this formidable addition to the deluxe repackaging of pop's past is exceptionally fresh. Motown and Atlantic have already been done to death in the reissue market; Stax is almost virgin territory, since only the most famous of its singles have been subject to much reissue. Of the 29 sides on disc one, for instance, which covers 1959-62, only William Bell's undersung country-soul of "You Don't Miss Your Ware" and The Mar-Keys' hard-bitten stomper "Last Night" are at all familiar. Here, though, are the early sides by Rufus Thomas, then not much more than an eager bluesman, his daughter Carla's lighter, poppier tunes; weird novelties such as Macy

Skipper's "Groovin' Off"; and doo-wop hangovers such as The Canes' "Why Should I Suffer With The Blues". Admittedly, not many of these tracks count as unrevealed masterpieces, but run-of-the-mill songwriting is the only thing that holds back some thrilling performances.

For Stax was a great *performers'* label. It released a lot of instrumentals during the 60s, by The Mar-Keys, The Bar-Kays and The MGs, and the development of a house band style was pursued with more dedication at Stax than anywhere else: Booker T Jones, Steve Cropper, Duck Dunn and Al Jackson Jr were the kind of players that could elevate studio routine into vital music, and it's amazing how few of these records sound as if they were played by rote. Listen to a throwaway piece like The Cobras' "Restless"



(1964): all it consists of is Cropper peeling licks off a single chord, but the impact is tremendous.

The lean, instinctual sound of Stax's records may have told against them. The vocals were often unusually low in the mix, as if the producers couldn't bear to let band details be swamped by the singer, and while there was little that could be called raw in any of their releases, a downhome Memphis blues feel percolated through even lightweight sides. Rufus Thomas, Johnnie Taylor and Eddie Floyd might have been straight bluesmen even a decade earlier. Strings were scarcely ever used, and not at all until William Bell's "Everybody Loves A Winner" (1967). Stax even recorded Albert King and gave him the outlier for "Cross-Cut Saw". Otis was a bawler; Sam and Dave were the hardest-hitting

harmony act in soul.

Songwriting, though, was a problem. Once the team of Isaac Hayes and David Porter hit its stride, delivering blue-chip material like "When Something Is Wrong With My Baby" for Sam and Dave, or the astonishing "Your Good Thing (Is About To End)" for Mabel John ("You had all the love I got/Ever we melt to water, and gets hot"), the songs began to endure, but all too many of the earlier sides have to transcend mundane tunes and lyrics. Stax could have used a Smokey Robinson.

The collection includes all the A-sides released by Stax and sister label Volt during the period, plus selected B's. This gives you the best of Redding, Sam and Dave, Floyd, Taylor, the Thomas, the Mad Lads, Bell, John and the instrumental groups. But often just as great are some of the obscurities which disappeared into private soul collections. There is a single side by the hiccups tenor of Eddie Jefferson (not the jazz cat), a couple of sides by the high, hysterical voice of Bobby Marchan; delicious slow soul from Dorothy Williams; an extraordinary side by Gorgeous George, Hank Ballard's valet, who had a Bobby Bland-like growl; Ruby Johnson's memorably heartless "I'll Run Your Hurt Away"; Judy Clay's solitary gem "You Can't Run Away From Your Heart"; the sweet, gospel-edged shimmy of "I Got A Sure Thing" by Ollie And The Nightingales; and a couple of searing tracks by the mysterious C L Blast.

The booklet that comes with the box tells you invaluable stuff: how Steve Cropper used a cigarette lighter to get the slide sound on "Soul Man"; that Eddie Floyd's "Big Bird" was inspired by his plane to Otis Redding's funeral being delayed (Floyd missed it as a result); how Sam didn't like most of the songs he and Dave were getting hits with; and how David Porter got the crowd sounds on "Soul Finger" (he shooed a bunch of schoolkids into the studio, gave them all Coca-Colas, and got them to shout the title when he pointed to them). But I have to say that it's not all entirely accurate: no guitar on Dennis Parker's "My Imaginary Guy"? That sure isn't a piccolo back there.

The sound is admirably crisp, but like so much CD remastering, it lacks original punch. I compared a couple of my Stax singles, Otis and Carla's "Knock On Wood"

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and The MGs' "Boor-Leg", with the versions here, and the vinyl has far more clout to it. So I'll keep my Stax singles. On the other hand, assembling this lot on original vinyl would cost a lot more even than the £100 that this set retails at. It's still a collector's set, rather than an indispensable purchase, since Stax music still be something of an individual taste. But I can't see anyone regretting the investment.

OUTLINES 2

OPERA

Nick Kimberley burns his way through the latest opera CDs.

OPERA'S PRIMARY appeal is its sheer emotional effusion, its lack of restraint in the face of the human condition. But not every opera wears its heart on its sleeve. Even during the 19th century, a period which almost defined its possibilities and failures through the singing voice, some works opted for emotional diffidence.

Although first performed in 1902, Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* is a 19th-century work that looks to the new era with a sense of foreboding. It's an opera in which the characters struggle, and more or less fail to express what they feel. The text is littered with hesitations and hints, none more revealing than the moment when Mélisande sings "Je ne suis pas heureuse" — "I am not happy". Given the turmoil she is living through in plague-ridden Allemonde, this is understatement taken almost to the point of repression, and audiences tittered when the opera was new. Dismayed, Debussy changed the phrase to the more positively negative "I am unhappy", but the original phrase is generally sung now. And yet it's a work with a real dramatic charge, thanks in part to the way Debussy allows the orchestra to extend the characters' emotional lives. The new recording by CHARLES DUTOIT (Decca) is excellent, well sung by a Francophone cast which gives substance to the curiously disembodied world the characters inhabit. The Montreal Symphony Orchestra finds every nuance without any sense of exaggeration. The work's enigmas remain as elusive and pervasive as they should be.

Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* inhabits a different musical universe, filled with grand orchestral and vocal gestures that seem to sweep characters and audience away on a tide of emotion. But it too is an opera about inchoate emotions, love discovered too soon or too late. It's customary to see Tchaikovsky's own suppressed homosexuality revealed in the work's suggestions of the impossibility of love, but the opera doesn't need an auto-biographical subtext to move us. Its portrait of a young woman, Tatyana, who has read above love in books, and so falls in love with the first handsome man she meets, rings true, as does its account of Onegin, a suave sophisticate whose most pressing emotion is boredom, until he discovers, years too late, that he does love Tatyana. The opera is an obvious choice for EMIL TCHAKAROV's sur-

Levine has Aptile Millo as Aida, an exciting counterbalance to the rather placid Plácido, and the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Chorus is just as grand as this grand opera needs.

After *Onegin* and *Aida*, the scaled-down baroque of Luigi Rossi's *Orfeo* can come as a bit of a relief. Monteverdi's version of the myth, first performed in 1607, is the first great opera, compact and pointed. Rossi got his hands on the story some 40 years later, and it's sometimes hard to believe he's telling the same tale. All sorts of gods and demigods cavort as in a Thorne Smith novel, there are travesty roles, a nuse and a comic character to send the whole thing up. The contrasting moods are superbly caught in the first recording of the opera, by WILLIAM CHRISTIE and his French baroque specialists Les Arts Florissants (Harmonia Mundi). With 17th-century operas it's often unclear what size and make-up of orchestra the composer would have had in mind, and Christie opes for quite a large ensemble, one that nevertheless keeps pace with the sinuous vocal lines of his excellent young cast.

The most famous opera version of the *Orfeo* yarn is probably Gluck's, composed over a century after Rossi's and once again stripping the narrative back to basics. Until recently Gluck was often seen as an acquired taste, his musical and dramatic austerity running a poor second to Mozart's *joy de vivre*. But Gluckites have fought back, none more combative than JOHN ELLIOT GARDINER who has repeatedly brought out the heart-stopping beauty of Gluck's long-breathed music. Now Gardiner has turned his attention to a rare Gluck comedy, *Les Pilâtres de la Magie*, better known as *La Rencontre Imprévue* (Erato). With its forgiving Sultan and its cod orientalisms, the opera is a sort of pre-echo of Mozart's *Señor Gil* of two decades later. Musically and dramatically more diffuse than Mozart's piece, *La Rencontre* has its moments of tenderness and beauty. As usual in his Gluck recordings, Gardiner conducts the Orchestra of Lyon Opera rather than a period instrument group, which is a shame, but the performance is shot through with the precise tension Gardiner has assimilated from his 'authentic' researches. Gluck's comic sense is less sure than his feeling for epic drama, but this fiest-ever recording of the work makes a strong case for it.



vey of 19th-century Russian opera (Sony Classical), and his recording is the best in the series so far. As Tatyana, Anna Tomowa-Sintow is radiant, particularly in the famous Letter Scene, one of the most painful outbursts in opera.

Plácido Domingo has recorded the role of the heroic Radames in Verdi's *Aida* three times, but he keeps coming back for more. Perhaps he was stirred by Luciano Pavarotti's strutting excellence in LOREN MAAZEL's otherwise drab recording (Decca). Or perhaps he feels he hasn't got it quite right yet. Whatever, some 20 years after his first recording, here he is again on the new version conducted by JAMES LEVINE (Sony Classical). The notes are all there, but I find Domingo a little faceless, almost too correct. Pavarotti's swagger is more exciting. But



the charts

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Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart continued from page 37

'Gran Partita' K361

The one good moment in *Amadeus* comes when an amazed Salieri begins to read the manuscript of K361's famous adagio, exclaiming "But the beginning's nothing – a couple of chords like a tusic squeezebox!" as the music floats out on the soundtrack. An open-air piece for large wind ensemble, this majestic serenade is one of many Mozart pieces whose origins remain obscure – we don't know who called it 'Gran Partita' or why or when it was written, although the latest critical theory, based on dating of the manuscript paper, airs the intriguing possibility that Mozart wrote it as a wedding present for his wife Constance, whom he married in 1782. "One of the most heavenly slow movements ever written," enthuses one critic of the adagio: it may read like absurd hyperbole, but when you're listening to the music you believe it all. Best buy: Edo De Waart/Netherlands Wind Ensemble (c/w *Serenade in E Flat* K375), Philips Silver Line Classics, 420 711 2 (single, mid-price CD).

'Haydn Quartets' K387, K421, K428, K458, K464, K465

"Scarcely any man can brook comparison with the great Mozart," wrote Joseph Haydn. The admiration was mutual, with Mozart dedicating this set of string quartets to the older composer, "Papa" Haydn, "from whom I learned how to write quartets". Haydn was present at the first public performance of the last three (which include the famous 'Dissonance', K465) at Mozart's Vienna home in February 1785, declaring afterwards to Mozart's father Leopold, "I tell you before God, as an honest man, that your son is the greatest composer I know, either personally or by name". This was not the common response: nearly everyone thought the quartets "too difficult" and there are stories of angry patrons tearing up their scores in frustration and disbelief, while one Italian punter returned his copy with a complaint about the number of "printer's errors". Mozart was no stranger to such controversies. "Write in a more popular style," one publisher is said to have told him, "otherwise I cannot publish and pay for anything more of yours." To which Mozart's alleged retort was, "Well then, I shall earn no more and I shall starve and go to the devil." Which is pretty much what happened. The 'Haydn Quartets' may well be the most complex and personal music which Mozart ever wrote, but they are also the crowning glory of his repertoire of chamber masterworks. Best buy: Salomon Quartet, Hyperion, CDS 44001/3 (mid-price, three-CD set).

Leck mich im Arsch K231 (382c)

All the evidence we have suggests that Mozart was nothing like the obnoxious beat of *Amadeus*, but there's no doubt that he had a lively sense of humour and took excessive delight in the scatological – an interest shared, it seems (to judge from their letters), by the entire Mozart family. A typical musical example of this predilection is the six-voice canon *Leck mich im Arsch*, the first completely unpurgated public performance of which took place as recently as . . . 1991! A translation of

the first two lines may help to explain this 200-year silence: "*Lick my arse, quickly, quickly*". Or, as John Zorn might have put it, eat shit classical snob! (Zorn should also try recording the closing *presto* of Mozart's 'Haffner' Symphony, which he apparently directed to be played as fast as possible.) Best buy: I'd wait for the Naked City version.

Clarinet Concerto K622

"There is more sense of Mozart taking farewell of life in the clarinet concerto than in the Requiem," writes Michael Levy, describing the slow movement as "that adagio beyond sadness which seems to say that 'tipeness is all'". The concerto, the last instrumental piece that Mozart completed, does have an autumnal, almost elegiac, air although Mozart could not have known when he wrote it that he had barely a few months to live. Originally composed for bassoon (a kind of tenor-to-bassoon clarinet), the piece was written for the virtuoso performer Anton Stadler, as was the earlier *Clarinet Quintet*. Perhaps partly at the prompting of Stadler, a close friend and fellow-Freemason, Mozart was the first major composer to really champion the (then relatively new) clarinet, featuring it both as a solo instrument and as a vital component in many of his later – and increasingly richly-textured – scores, as for example in the exquisite woodwind shadings of *Piano Concerto No 22* K482. Best buy: Thea King, Tate/ECO (c/w *Clarinet Quintet*), Hyperion CDA 66199 (single, full-price CD).

Le Nozze di Figaro K492

"Too many notes!" Emperor Joseph II's clinker of a response to *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* is exceeded only by the remarks of cloth-eared Viennese aristocrat Count Carl von Zinzendorf, who – when not complaining about the audience's "bad smell" – noted in various diary entries that he found *Le Nozze di Figaro* "boring", *Don Giovanni* also "boring", *La Clemenza di Tito* "most tedious" and *Die Zauberflöte* "an unbelievable farce". The Count was well out of step with public opinion on *Figaro*, a big hit in Vienna in 1786 and an even bigger one the next year in Prague, from where the visiting Mozart reported "Nothing is played, sung or whistled but *Figaro* . . . Everywhere, *Figaro*." Part romantic comedy, part satire on class privilege, *Figaro*'s other marriage, of words and music, makes it, says Michael Levy, "the most perfect of all operas", while Frank Granville Barker rates it as "perhaps the most perfect work of art that man has ever created". Brigid Brophy's brilliant study, *Mozart The Dramatist*, locating the opera in the context of Enlightenment philosophy, points up its radical politics with regard to class and the position of women and also reveals the revolutionary potential of its basic belief in true love and forgiveness – a belief which lay behind nearly all of Mozart's major operas and, arguably, much of his life. All things considered, he had a lot to forgive. Best buy: Giulini, EMI, CMS 7 63266 2 (mid-price, two-CD set). *

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